

RESEARCH ON:

# KEY QUALITY FEATURES AND FORMATS OF **ONLINE AND BLENDED** **LEARNING** FOR THE **YOUTH WORK** FIELD AND **NON-FORMAL** **EDUCATION**



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# KEY QUALITY FEATURES AND FORMATS OF ONLINE AND BLENDED LEARNING FOR THE YOUTH WORK FIELD AND NON-FORMAL EDUCATION

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## 01. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. Research Concept
- 1.2. Aim & Objectives

## 02. METHODOLOGY

- 2.1. Respondents' Profile
- 2.2. Survey Questions per profile

## 03. DATA ANALYSIS

- 3.1. Learners
- 3.2. Courses Facilitators
- 3.3. Courses Providers

## 04. CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

**01.**

# INTRODUCTION



# 01.

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Research Concept

**Purpose:** The main idea for this research was to explore and to identify key quality features and formats of online and blended learning which are most suitable for the international Youth Work field in the frame of on-Formal Education. The target of the research were mainly European Youth Programmes' stakeholders of different experiences in online and blended learning, such as trainers, facilitators, youth workers, course providers and learners belonging to the different mentioned categories and more in general the subscribers of the HOP platform.

**Timeframe:** The research has focused on online/blended learning activities between the years 2020-2022.

### 1.2. Aim and objectives

The research aimed to identify those key features and formats that are suitable and important for the quality of online and blended non-formal learning activities. Moreover, the research was connected with the aim and aligned with the objectives of **HOP Council**.

HOP council aims to promote the potential of online and blended learning in European youth work as well as support it within Erasmus+ Youth and European Solidarity Corps. The Council's objectives are

- to strengthen the value and set the example of quality online and blended learning within non-formal education in the youth work field;
- to map online and blended learning developments in European youth work;
- to create space for stakeholders of European youth work to exchange views/perspectives/practices on online and blended learning;
- to support Erasmus+ Youth and European Solidarity Corps national agencies and the resource centres as well as organisations active in the European youth programmes in their online and blended learning training offers;
- to build competences in online and blended learning among youth trainers, youth workers and the national agencies;
- to enhance the development of the online and blended learning courses, within both European youth programmes, by providing appropriate online platform.

**02.**

## METHODOLOGY

## 02. METHODOLOGY

### 2.1. Survey Questions for Learners

The survey was conducted online from the 14th of November to the 11th of December 2022 and has been published and sent to those involved in online and blended learning activities in the HOP Platform (as learners, facilitators and course providers), as well as disseminated online and among participants in other online and blended activities.

The survey was divided into three levels according to the respondent's role in an online /blended learning activity and the perspective they would like to answer.

- Learner in online/blended learning activities
- Educator/facilitator in online/blended learning activities
- Course provider in online/blended learning activities (see more about the roles on the "Respondent Profile" sector below)

The final number of responses gathered for the survey was 190, including 116 responses from learners, 54 from educators/facilitators and 20 from course developers on the following questions:

#### For Learners in online/blended activities

##### How many of the courses did you complete?

- > None
- > Less than half
- > More than half
- > All

##### What prevented you/what were the obstacles for completing the courses?

- > Content was not relevant enough
- > Methods were not engaging enough
- > There was no interaction with other learners
- > There was too much interaction with other learners
- > There were too many tasks to complete
- > The flow of the course was not logical
- > There were not enough synchronous elements (learning happening at the same time with other learners)
- > I haven't planned my time efficiently enough
- > I was not very passionate about the topic
- > Other

##### How would you grade the user-friendliness of \*\*\*, on a scale from 1 to 5?

- > HOP
- > Canvas
- > CoE
- > Other

**Which of the following activities were the most, and which were the least effective for your own learning process?**

- > Interactive activities (quizzes\, interactive videos\, etc.),
- > Embedded videos, Integrated visual elements (infographics\, pictures\, gifs\, etc.),
- > Integrated external tools (padlet\, mentimeter\, etc.),
- > Small group tasks,
- > Discussion Forums,
- > Assignments/tasks,
- > Chat,
- > Reading materials,
- > Books (with different content chapters),
- > Wiki,
- > Glossary

**How well do the following digital tools work for you when integrated in an online learning course?**

- > Tools for collecting ideas (like Jamboard, Padlet)
- > Video sharing platforms (like Youtube, Vimeo)
- > Tools for surveying opinion (like Mentimeter, Slido)
- > Audio podcasts
- > Games (like Kahoot, Wordwall)
- > Shared folders and documents (like google drive, onedrive, etc.)
- > Is there any other digital tool you can suggest to integrate in online courses?
- > On a scale from 1 to 5, to what extent do you usually use the external resources provided in online courses (web pages, publications, videos, etc.)

**On a scale from 1 to 5, to what extent do you like the opportunity to create your own contents (wiki, forums, etc.)?****On a scale from 1 to 5, how would you rate the effectiveness of synchronous learning activities?**

- > How would you balance between synchronous and asynchronous learning activities?
- > More synchronous than asynchronous activities
- > The same amount of both types of activities
- > More asynchronous than synchronous activities

**What is for you the ideal duration of a synchronous learning activity (webinar, online panel, etc.)?**

- > 1 hour
- > 1-2 hours
- > 2-3 hours
- > More than 3 hours

**What do you prefer more?**

- > Facilitated online courses
- > Self-paced online courses

**Are badges useful for supporting your learning?**

- > Yes
- > No

**What of the following would you like to see more and what less in an online course?**

- > Facilitation from the educators,
- > Interactive activities, Inputs from external experts,
- > Opportunities for informal socialisation,
- > Interaction between the participants,
- > Time to complete tasks,
- > Visual elements,
- > Tasks and assignments,
- > Reading materials,
- > Freedom to choose what and when to learn

**What of the following prevents you most from learning in online courses?**

- > Lack of time,
- > Having too many course assignments,
- > Lack of face to face interaction,
- > Lack of guidance and support from an educator,
- > Low level of interactivity,
- > Lack of clear structure,
- > Complexity of the platform,
- > Lack of a safe learning environment,
- > Having too many distractions outside of the course,
- > Lack of ability to manage your own learning,
- > Lack of access to stable internet and/or devices

**On a scale from 1 to 5, how much do you use the digital tools that you learned in the online courses (e.g. in your own online courses, in youth work)?****How much time do you spend on an online course?**

- > Less than 1 hour a week
- > A few hours a week
- > About 1 hour a day
- > A few hours a day

**What is in your opinion an ideal length of an online course, taking into account both synchronous and asynchronous learning activities?**

- > Less than a month
- > 1 to 2 months
- > 3 to 6 months
- > Self-paced

**Have you participated in a blended learning activity?**

- > Yes
- > No

**What is the most important added value of blended activities compared to online activities?****On a scale from 1 to 5, which methods are the most useful to be done in the online phase of the blended course?**

- > Reading introductory course materials
- > (Video) interviewing beneficiaries and colleagues from the local environment

- > First exploration of topics in discussion forums
- > Getting to know each other through small tasks
- > Self-assessment of competences (pre and post)

**What more would you like to add, which can help online learning educators to design more effective online and blended learning courses?**

### **For Educators/Facilitators in online/blended learning activities**

**How many online courses did you facilitate?**

- > 1
- > 1 to 5
- > 5 to 10
- > More than 10

**What excites you the most about online learning platforms? What are the key opportunities that they offer?**

**What are the tools that you use the most in facilitating online learning?**

- > Assignments/tasks
- > Embedded videos
- > Integrated visual elements (infographics, pictures, gifs, etc.)
- > Books (with different content chapters)
- > Interactive tools (quizzes, interactive videos, etc.)
- > Wiki
- > Glossary
- > Tools for collecting ideas (like Jamboard, Padlet)
- > Video sharing platforms (like Youtube, Vimeo)
- > Tools for surveying opinion (like Mentimeter, Slido)
- > Audio podcasts
- > Games (like Kahoot, Wordwall)
- > Shared folders and documents (like google drive, onedrive, etc.)
- > Other: please specify

**What are the approaches/methods that you use the most in facilitating online learning?**

- > Discussions
- > Individual tasks (e.g. reading materials)
- > Expert inputs
- > Small group tasks
- > Synchronous meetings (e.g. webinars)
- > Interactive activities
- > Other (please specify)

**According to your experience so far in designing and/or facilitating online and blended courses/activities, which tools do you believe are more effective for participants' learning? (List of options)**

**In your opinion, how to balance between synchronous and asynchronous learning activities?**

- > More synchronous than asynchronous activities
- > The same amount of both types of activities
- > More asynchronous than synchronous activities

**In your experience, what are the main things missing on current online platforms for more productive/effective learning experience?**

**In your opinion as an educator, what is still needed in making the most effective learning experience in online learning?**

### **For Course Providers in online/blended learning activities**

**How many online courses did you create/provide?**

- > 1
- > 1 to 5
- > 5 to 10
- > More than 10

**How many blended learning activities did you create/provide?**

- > 1
- > 1 to 5
- > 5 to 10
- > More than 10

**How easy was it to create/provide an online course or a blended learning activity (scale from 1 to 5)**

**Was it the pandemic that urged you to move online or you have been providing online courses/blended activities already before?**

- > The pandemic led me to follow that road
- > I was providing online courses/blended activities before the pandemic
- > Other (please specify)

**What do you believe is missing from online courses or/and blended courses?**

## **2.2. Respondents' Profile**

To understand and analyse the findings of the research it is important first to see the profiles of the respondents.

The survey had three target groups.

- Learners of online & blended activities
- Educators (Facilitators and Trainers) of online and blended activities
- Online and blended activities providers

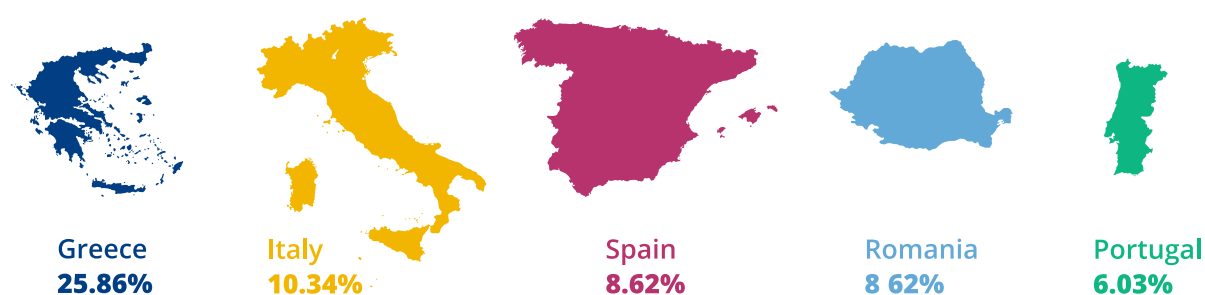
One could respond depending on the role they had once or multiple times during an online or a blended activity. Participants could respond from any or all of the three roles.

To differentiate between different profiles of learners, the survey included disaggregation questions: age, gender, country of residence, role in the youth field, level of working and types of courses they had participated in.

According to age, respondents were divided in four groups: 18-25, 25-30, 30-50 and above 50. In the group of learners, the highest number of respondents can be seen between 30-50 y.o. Two-thirds of respondents are female (72,41%).

	Number of responses	%
<b>18-25</b>	15	12.93%
<b>25-30</b>	12	10.34%
<b>30-50</b>	69	59.48%
<b>above 50</b>	20	17.24%

A special focus has been set on the country division of the learners' perspective responses. The research itself has been conducted on behalf of the Hellenic National Agency (INEDIVIM) and therefore it was important to see how online and blended learning activities are perceived by Greek learners/ participants of activities. Moreover, the number of responses gathered from Greece was really high (26,86% of the overall responses) opposite to other countries and therefore the team moved into analysing the results by having two different "country groups" Greece and other countries.



When analysing the results, the team looked at any potential differences in responses between different groups of learners. The most significant differences were observed between different age groups, between respondents with different levels of experiences, and between participants in different types of courses (facilitated online courses vs. MOOCs). Only minor differences appeared between respondents that had different roles in the youth field or different countries of residence, and the other disaggregation categories did not appear to have a significant role. All relevant outcomes regarding preferences of different groups of learners are included in this report.

Due to the small number of respondents from the perspectives of educators/facilitators and course providers, their responses were analysed as a whole, not disaggregated according to these criteria.



**03.**

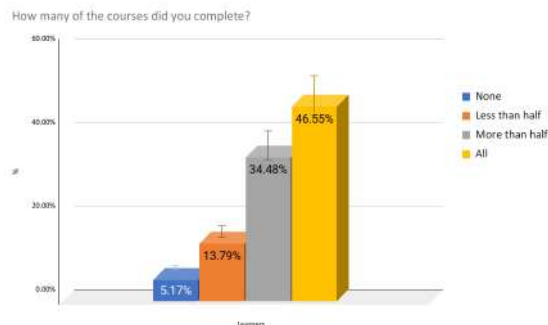
## DATA ANALYSIS

## 03. DATA ANALYSIS

This part includes analysis of the received responses. The analysis is provided question by question, outlining the main outcomes and pointing out any significant differences observed between different groups of learners. Whenever appropriate, charts and tables are used to illustrate the findings.

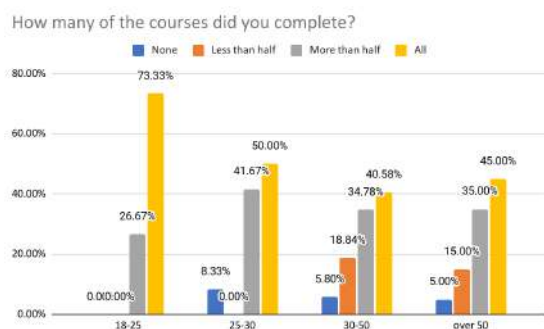
### 3.1. Learners

#### How many of the courses did you complete?



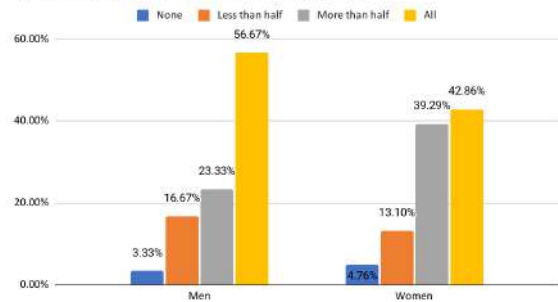
Overall, nearly half of the participants completed all the courses they started.

This percentage is additionally boosted by a very high percentage in the age group of 18-25, where nearly 3 quarters completed all courses. For the rest, it reads that the completion drops with age, though there is a slight jump among those older than 50.



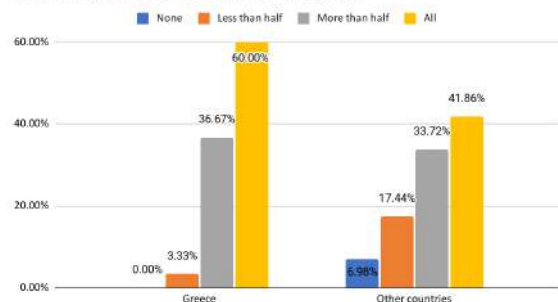
Men completed more courses than women (the difference is nearly 14%). However, there are 16% more women who completed more than half of the courses compared to men.

#### How many of the courses did you complete?



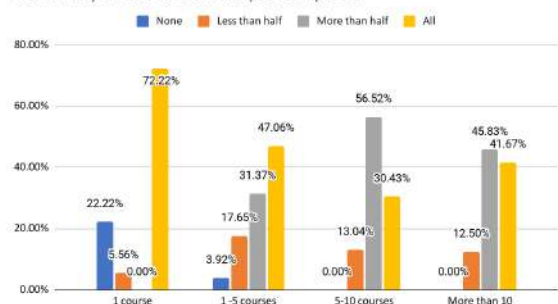
It would appear that Greece has a significantly higher completion rate than other countries.

#### How many of the courses did you complete?



Unsurprisingly, those who took only one course have either not completed the course at all (and then did not take any further courses) or completed it fully. The completion then drops with the number of courses taken, though there is an interesting jump again with those taking more than 10 courses. Perhaps those are more committed ones, as 87,5% completed more than half or all!

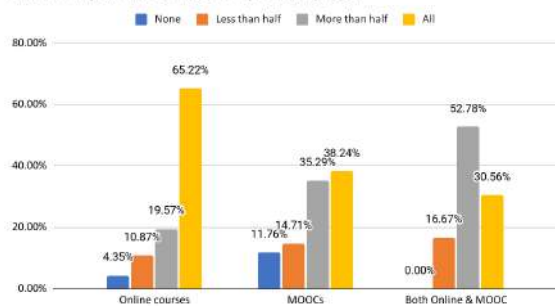
#### How many of the courses did you complete?



Again, no surprise that MOOCs (being often self-paced and mostly asynchronous) have significantly lower completion rates than when

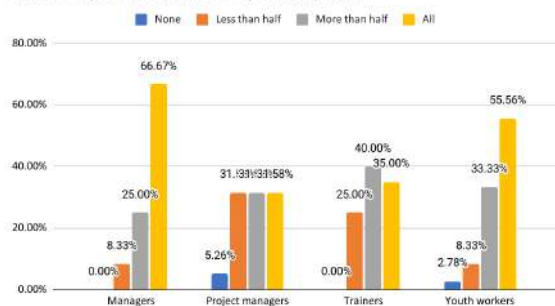
people attend online courses. It would appear that facilitation and group interaction and size influence the completion, though when checking questions that ask this directly, this is not mentioned (e.g. for MOOCs, only 2 people said that the lack of interaction hindered their participation). This result is also interesting: could it be also related to the fact that while in MOOC not having much interaction you also don't "feel guilty" if you don't finish it, as you are also not emotionally connected to any facilitators or colleagues.

How many of the courses did you complete?



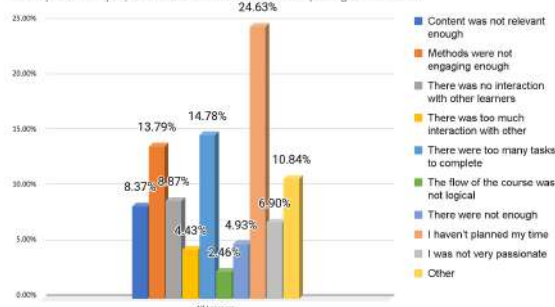
Managers and youth workers seem to have the highest completion rate. The trainers have it significantly lower. In addition, project managers have the overall lowest completion

How many of the courses did you complete?



What prevented you / what were the obstacles for completing the courses?

What prevented you/what were the obstacles for completing the courses?



All	
8.37%	Content was not relevant enough
13.79%	Methods were not engaging enough
8.87%	There was no interaction with other learners
4.43%	There was too much interaction with other learners
14.78%	There were too many tasks to complete
2.46%	The flow of the course was not logical
4.93%	There were not enough synchronous elements (learning happening at the same time with other learners)
24.63%	I haven't planned my time efficiently enough
6.90%	I was not very passionate about the topic
10.84%	Other

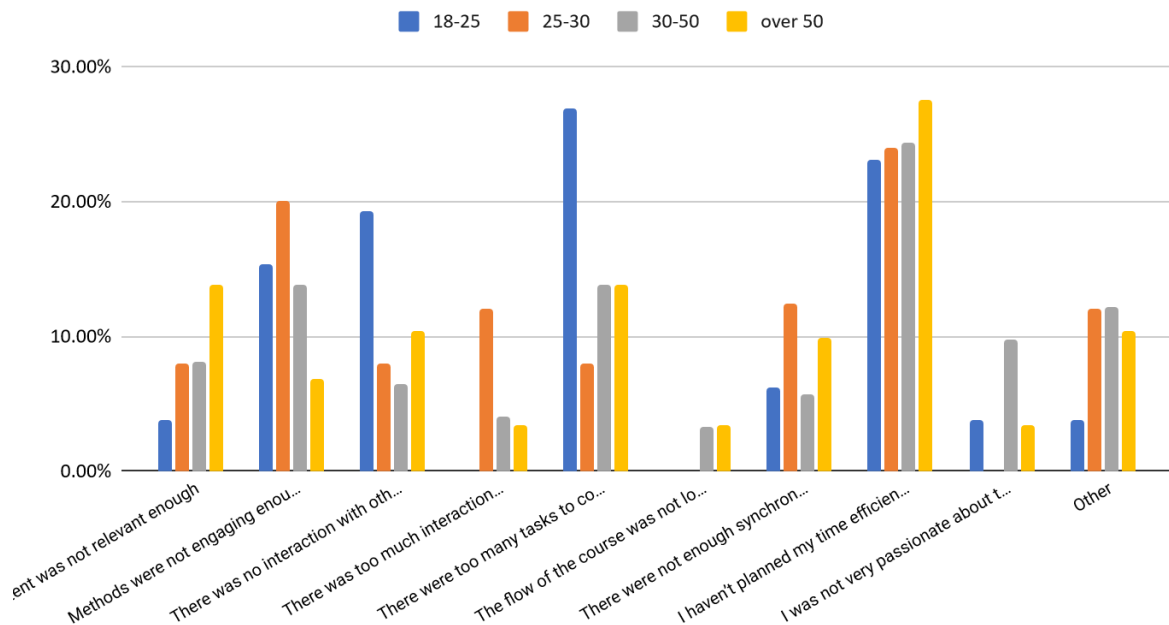
It is clear that, when looking at the overall picture, the main reason for not completing the courses was that learners did not plan their time efficiently enough, which is a reason intrinsic to the learner, and not directly related to the course itself. This is the no 1 reason for all age groups (only 18-25 have too many tasks to complete as one person higher). The other two key reasons are too many tasks to complete, and methods not being engaging enough, which are reasons that have to do with the course itself. The 3rd one perhaps is the legacy of the residential courses and the expectation to be engaged.

On the other hand, the flow of the course is the least chosen for all age groups and this could be that it is not so crucial online, especially with the pick-and-choose approach! Interesting could also be to understand what does it mean "not plan time efficiently",

meaning giving priority to other things, like for example work instead of study? This was not researched within this study.

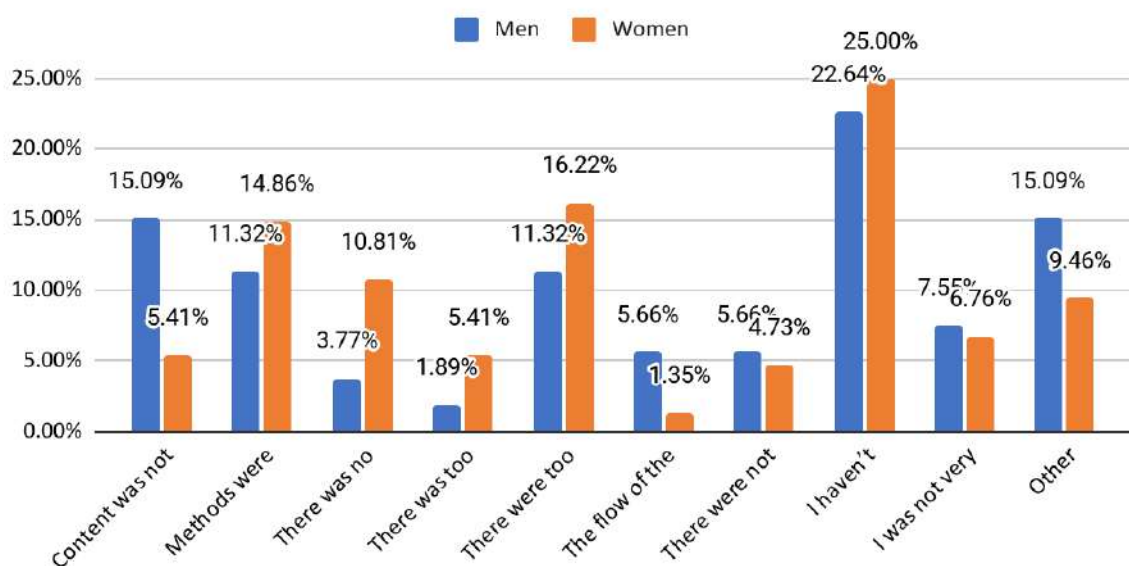
"I was not very passionate about the topic" was much more relevant for ages 30-50. This is also very interesting in comparison to the group ages 18-25 which gives more importance to the interaction. Would be also interesting to see if for onsite activities this interaction remains crucial for younger people.

### What prevented you/what were the obstacles for completing the courses?



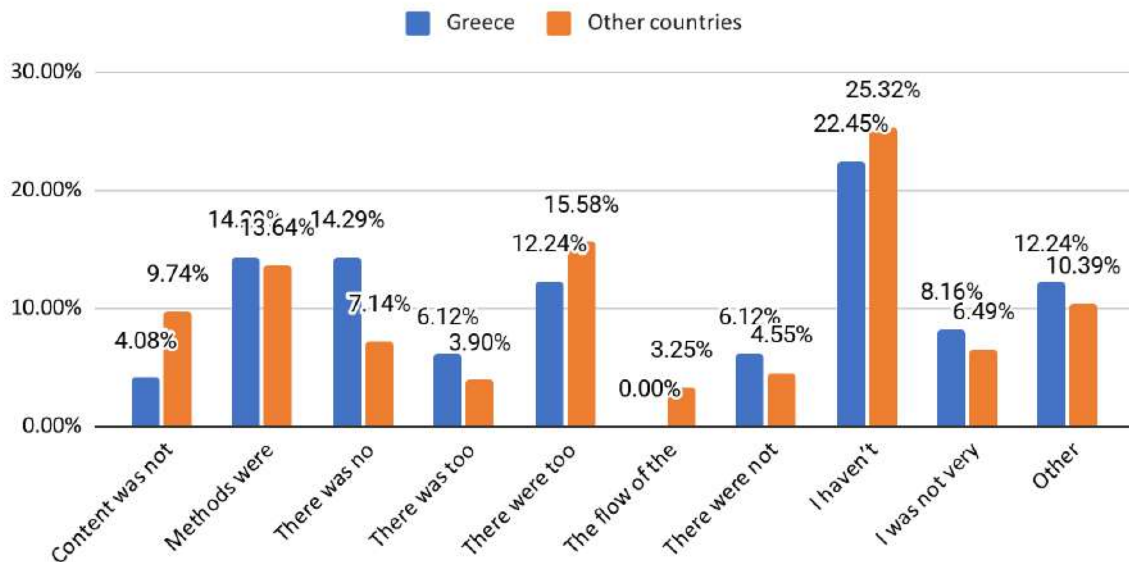
Women follow the same trend as the average, while for men, the 2nd most common reason is that the content was not relevant enough. Women being closer to the average also make sense, as they were in the significant majority when answering the survey.

### What prevented you/what were the obstacles for completing the courses?



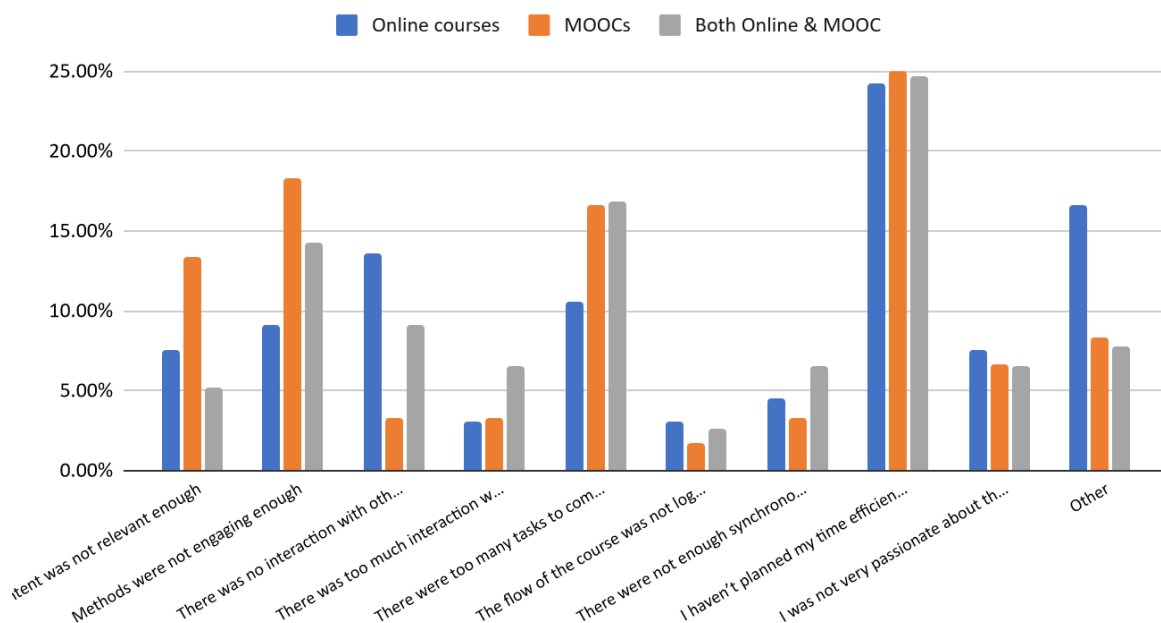
For Greece, one of the top 3 reasons was a lack of interaction with other learners. Greek participants had much fewer issues with the content and flow compared to others.

### What prevented you/what were the obstacles for completing the courses?



For online courses, not having enough interaction with other learners resurfaces again, as the 2nd key reason (if we exclude 'other'). This is interesting given that there is much more interaction in online courses than in MOOCs, for example. But then expectations could be different as well. For MOOCs, this aspect is not significant, while one of the top 4 it is placed the content, probably because it is the actual quality key for MOOCs. It is also interesting to see the relatively high number of answers in "There were too many tasks to complete", which could also be connected to the efficiency in planning the time, or the lack of explanations of the tasks before enrolling in the courses.

### What prevented you/what were the obstacles for completing the courses?

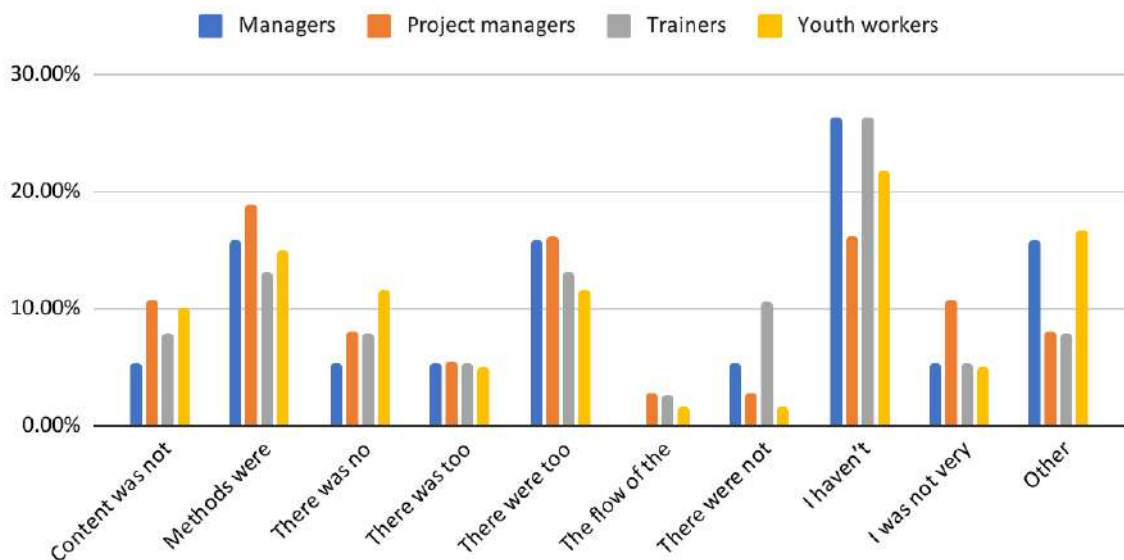


## What prevented you/what were the obstacles for completing the courses?

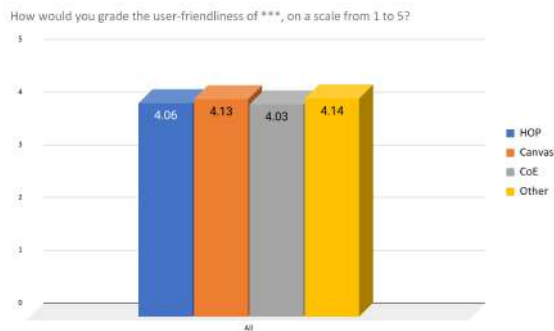


Project managers are the only category where methods not being engaging enough is the top answer.

## What prevented you/what were the obstacles for completing the courses?

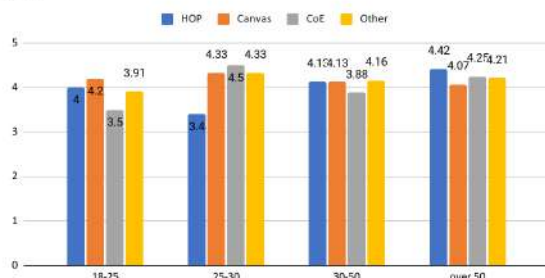


## How would you grade the user-friendliness of (online platforms) on a scale from 1 to 5?



Looking at the overall picture (graph above), all platforms scored very similarly. All platforms have over 4 on average, which is a very good sign! This might be due to a desirable sample, where people who wanted to respond to the survey were engaged learners, relatively happy with their experiences. Canvas and other platforms win with a small margin over HOP and CoE platforms (which are both based on Moodle technology). But the difference is not that big in most cases. One interesting fact is that those over 30 (and especially over 50) are significantly more positive about Moodle platforms, which could be because they were also quite popular for the studies. But then 18-25 are quite positive about HOP! Canvas is only the most popular for 18-25 year olds, but it has a good average, as it has continuously positive ratings among all age groups.

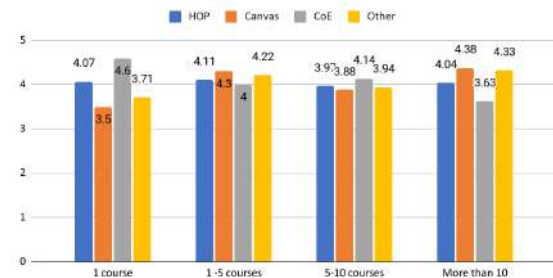
How would you grade the user-friendliness of \*\*\*, on a scale from 1 to 5?



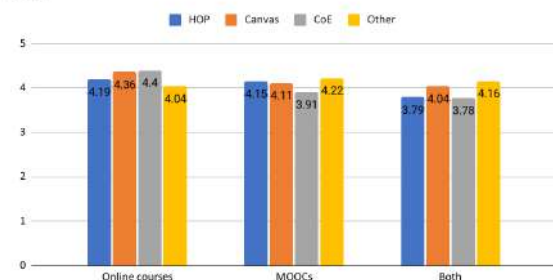
5-10 courses do not follow the trend! HOP has quite a stable rating of around 4 and Canvas is either significantly more positive than others or negative. This is an interesting trend. It gets 3.5 for one course, while HOP gets 4.07, which might mean that HOP is easier to learn to start with. But then for those who attended more than 10 courses, Canvas rules! Or maybe also that people get used to a

platform.

How would you grade the user-friendliness of \*\*\*, on a scale from 1 to 5?

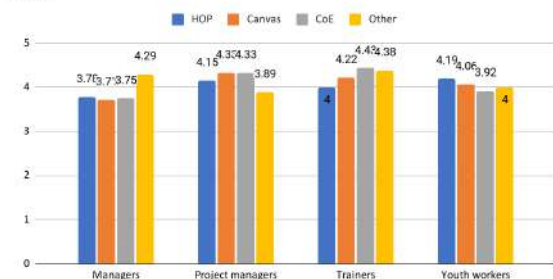


How would you grade the user-friendliness of \*\*\*, on a scale from 1 to 5?



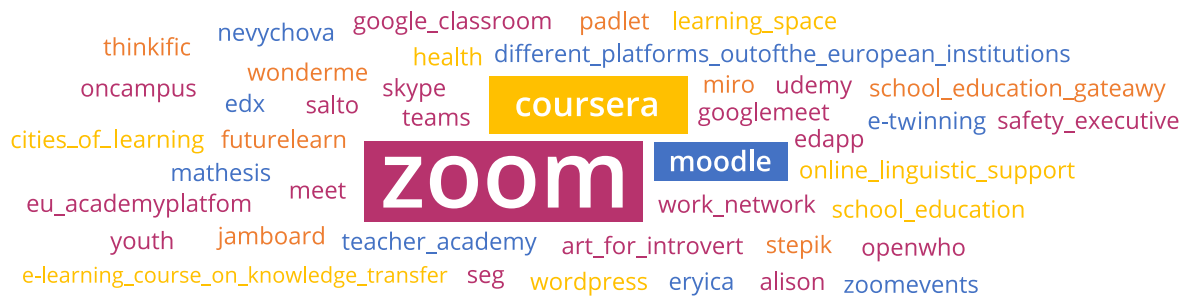
Trainers are the most positive in their ratings, perhaps because they find it easier to master the platforms because they often create courses on them as well. If we see them as content creators, then HOP seems to be the most challenging. For the CoE could be respondents from the CoE pool. Managers do not view platforms that positively, apart from the "other". Very positive also the scores of the Youth Workers follow the trend of Trainers and Project Managers.

How would you grade the user-friendliness of \*\*\*, on a scale from 1 to 5?



'Other' platforms used by the respondents: Among the most famous platforms was Zoom (18 responses) and Coursera (14 responses) with Moodle platforms following (7 responses). The following word-cloud collects all responses.



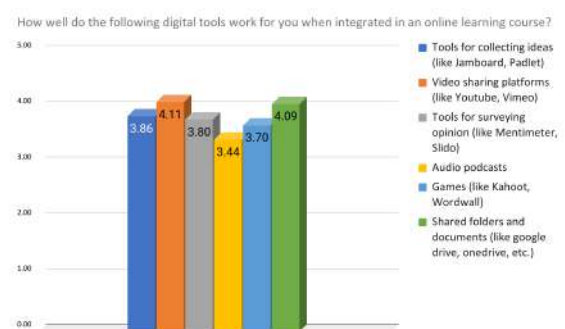


Which of the following activities were the most, and which were the least effective for your own learning process?

#1	Assignments/tasks	#4.05 average
#2	Reading materials	#4.24 average
#3	Embedded videos	#4.9 average
#4	Integrated visual elements ( <i>infographics, pictures, gifs, etc.</i> )	#4.97 average
#5	Integrated external tools ( <i>padlet, mentimeter, etc.</i> )	#5.16 average
#6	Discussion Forums	#5.59 average
#7	Interactive activities (quizzes, interactive videos, etc.)	#5.71 average
#8	Books ( <i>with different content chapters</i> )	#7.22 average
#9	Small group tasks	#7.92 average
#10	Chat	#8.28 average
#11	Wiki	#9.7 average
#12	Glossary	#10.26 average

Following the above results, we can see that the most effective activities for learners learning development are the assignments/tasks and the reading materials, while the least effective ones are the glossary and wiki. Chats and small group tasks are also evaluated quite poorly. Overall, it seems that in online and blended learning, individual tasks are much more effective (but not necessarily the most liked) for one's learning process than the ones that should be done in groups. All four most effective activities are things that the learner can do by themselves - read text, watch video etc.

How well do the following digital tools work for you when integrated in an online learning course?



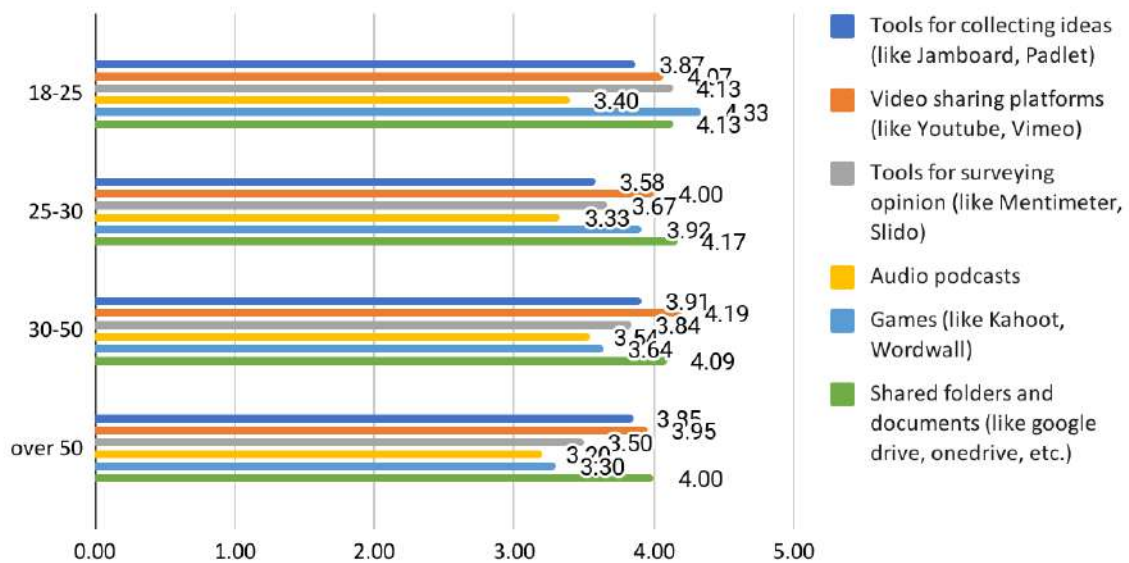
All digital tools are positively assessed, with average grades from 3.44 to 4.11. This is so even though "integrated external tools" were not rated very high in the previous question (with an average rank of 5.16).

A fascinating trend that can be observed here is that games drop in rating with the increase of age! And there is no exception here. Similar could be tools for surveying if it weren't for 30-50 years old. The most popular are video-sharing platforms, followed by shared documents and folders. Both of those are more focused on content than interaction, which can tell us that this is more in the focus for the learners. The least appreciated are audio podcasts, which could also make sense being online courses more focused on visual learning.

Over 50 are below the average for all tools.

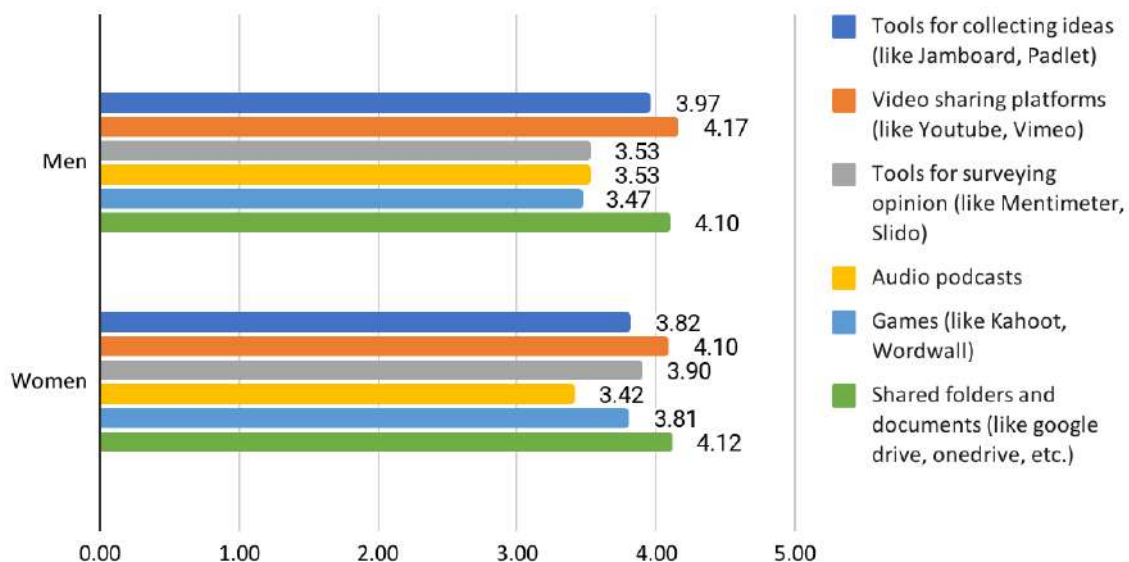


How well do the following digital tools work for you when integrated in an online learning course?



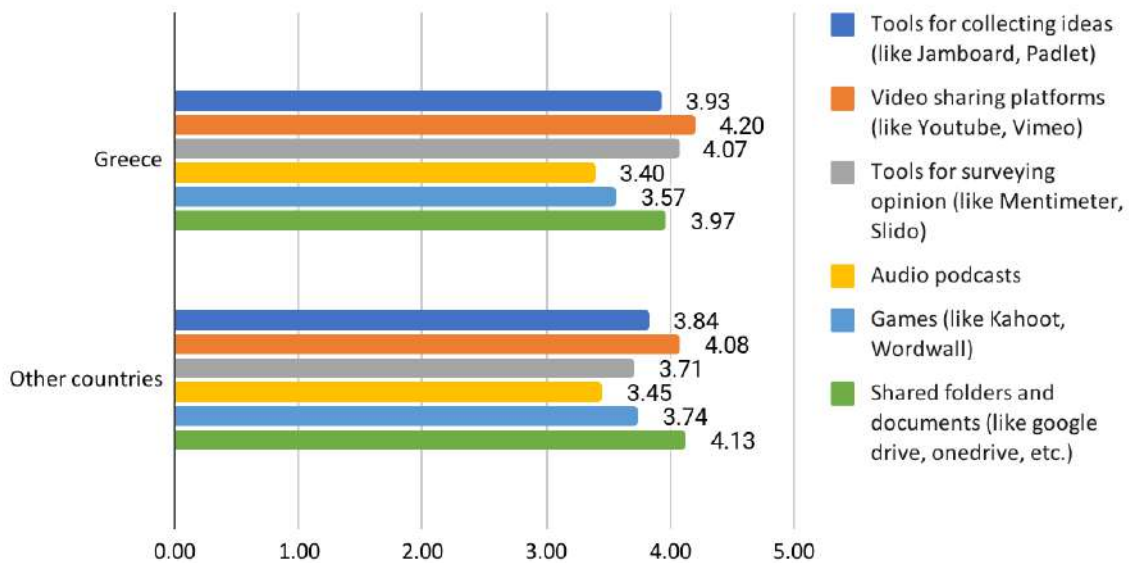
The results are quite similar between the two genders. Women appreciate a bit more tools for surveying and men tools for collecting ideas. The two main remaining videos and shared documents.

How well do the following digital tools work for you when integrated in an online learning course?



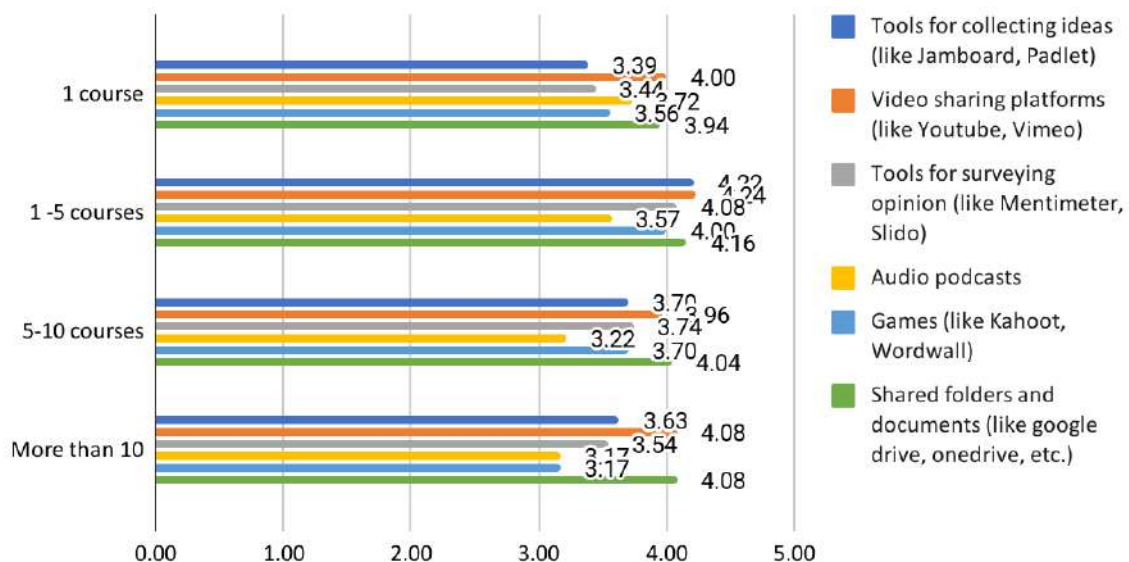
There are no stark differences between respondents from different countries. Learners from Greece appreciate more the tools for surveying opinion, but less shared documents.

### How well do the following digital tools work for you when integrated in an online learning course?



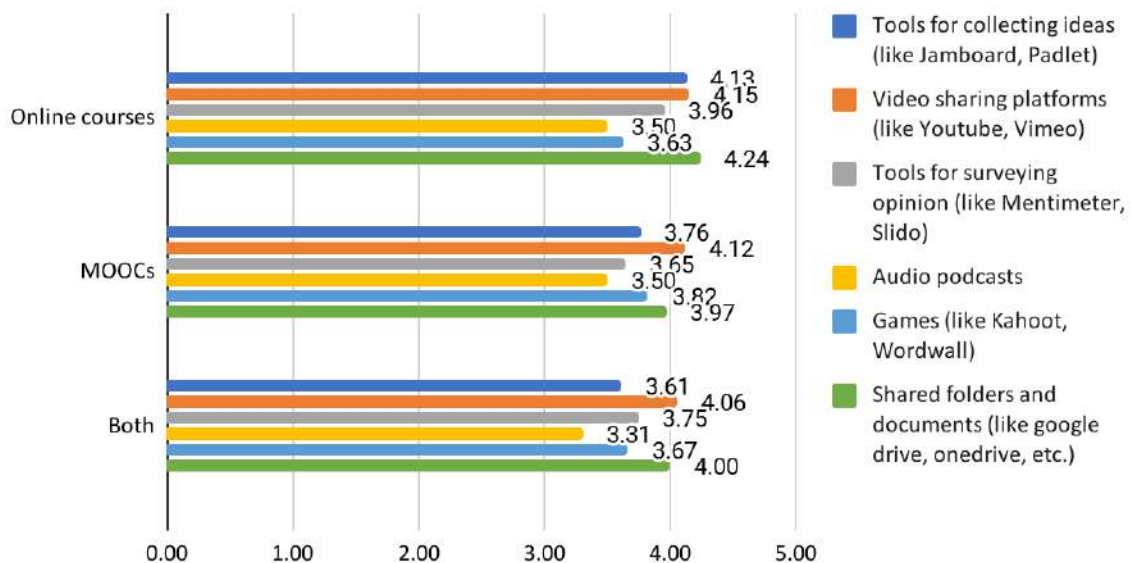
In most of the categories, those that have attended 1 to 5 courses are generally happier with all the tools than others. This could be because first-timers need time to get used to the tools and those that see them more than 5 times get bored with them! In many of the categories, in fact, first-timers are less positive about tools. One exception is Audio podcasts (which are on average the lowest of all).

### How well do the following digital tools work for you when integrated in an online learning course?



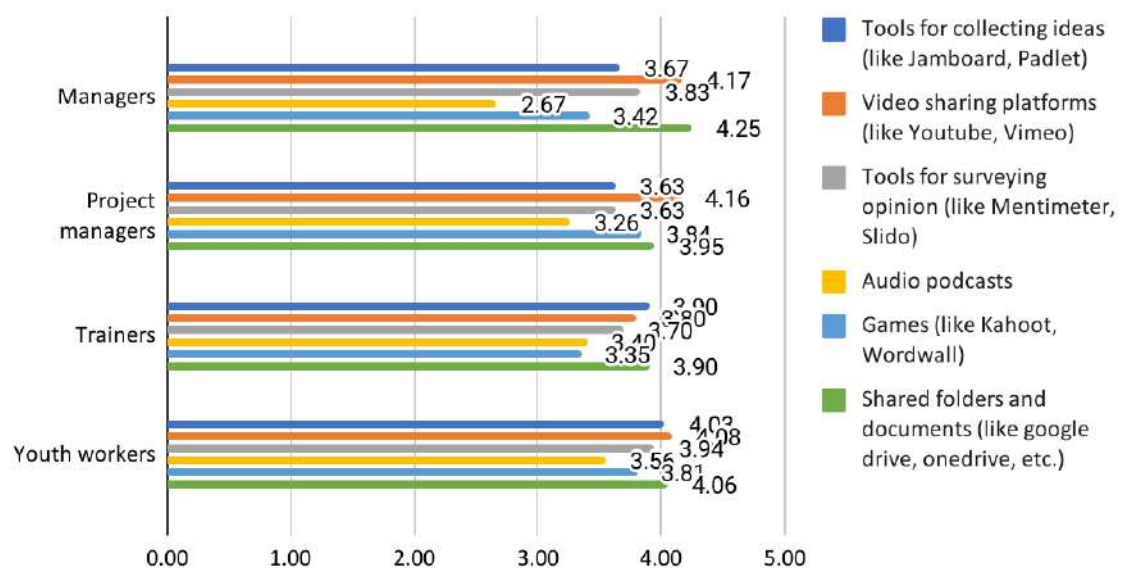
Those that have attended online courses are generally more positive about the tools than those attending MOOCs or others. Perhaps since the experience of online courses is more intense and dynamic. Or it could be that some of those tools are interactive only in synchronous modus, which doesn't usually happen in MOOCs.

### How well do the following digital tools work for you when integrated in an online learning course?

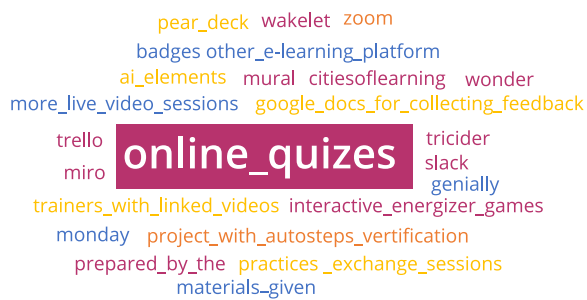


Youth workers are generally positive about the different tools, while for the others this fluctuates a bit. Trainers have no tools that they marked over 4.00 on average, which is quite interesting. The lowest score overall (even for other questions inclusive) was were audio podcasts for the managers! But then they appreciate shared folders and documents. Looking at the trainers it could also be that they consider tools just a means to reach the learning objectives, but not the most important part.

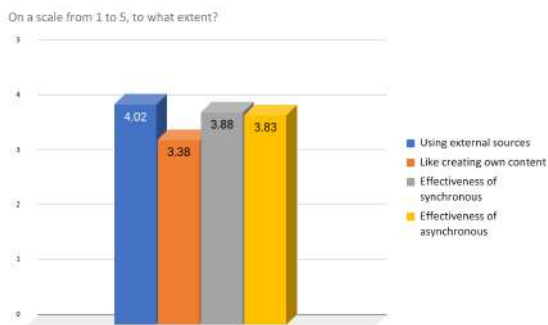
### How well do the following digital tools work for you when integrated in an online learning course?



## Is there any other digital tool you can suggest to integrate in online courses?



## On a scale from 1 to 5, to what extent do you..



In general, learners appreciate using external sources more, rather than creating their own content. When it comes to the effectiveness of synchronous and asynchronous learning, both are evaluated almost equally.

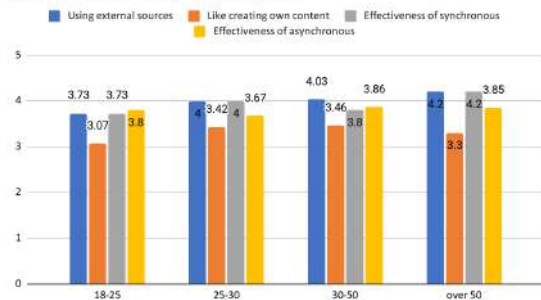
External sources seem to be OK appreciated by learners of different ages, though an interesting trend is that the older they get they appreciate them a bit more.

As for creating their content, this is quite low, which could be down to the confidence and autonomy of learners. This confidence grows a bit with age, but then it drops slightly again for those over 50+.

In terms of the effectiveness of synchronous and asynchronous, the average is similar. Those between 25 and 30 and over 50+ prefer synchronous activities.

Women seem to slightly prefer creating their content over men.

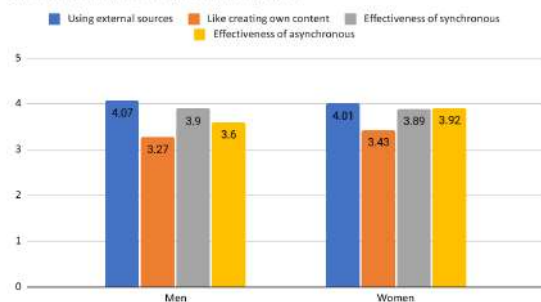
On a scale from 1 to 5, to what extent?



Women seem to think that asynchronous activities are more effective in comparison to men; maybe this could be related to the effectiveness in the planning of time.

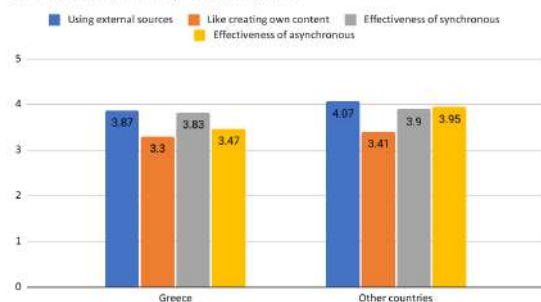
In both cases, the majority prefer using external content more than preparing their own.

On a scale from 1 to 5, to what extent?



Other countries seem to think that asynchronous is more effective than those from Greece. If we go with the stereotype that Greek learners prefer interaction, this could be one of the reasons. In other countries the effectiveness of asynchronous and synchronous activities are the same.

On a scale from 1 to 5, to what extent?

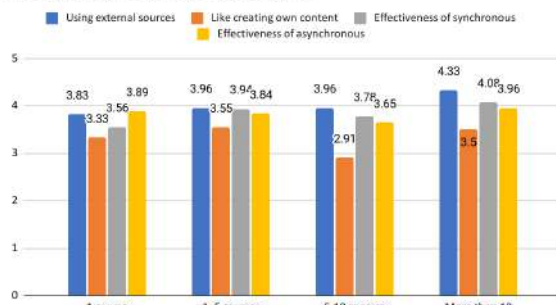


Using external sources seems to grow progressively with the number of courses learners participate in. Once again, perhaps learners get more courageous and curious

with the number of courses they take. Meanwhile, the creation of own content remains unpopular throughout.

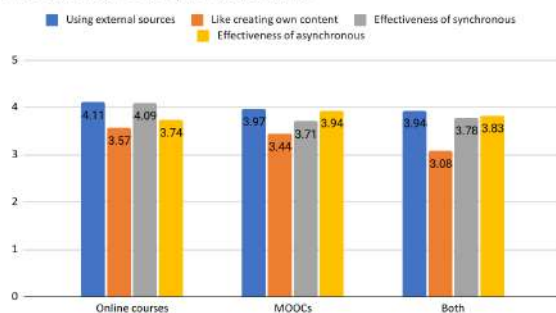
It is also interesting to see that with more than 10 courses the effectiveness of synchronous increases towards the asynchronous.

On a scale from 1 to 5, to what extent?



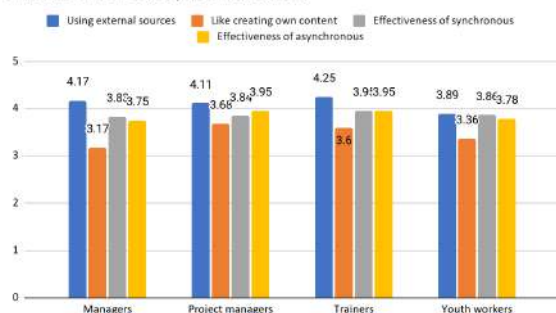
Learners in online courses believe synch is more effective, MOOC learners the opposite, which probably shows also the reason why those learners choose MOOCs or online courses.

On a scale from 1 to 5, to what extent?



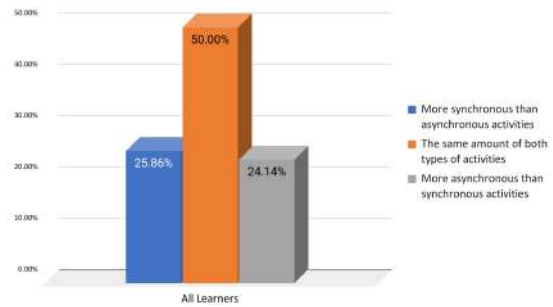
Managers seem to have the biggest gap between using external sources and creating their own content. One reason could be that managers tend to optimise the resources already existing instead of creating new ones.

On a scale from 1 to 5, to what extent?



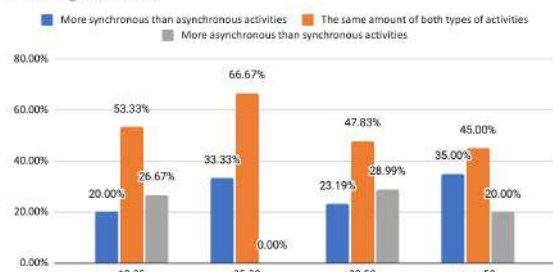
How would you balance between synchronous and asynchronous learning activities?

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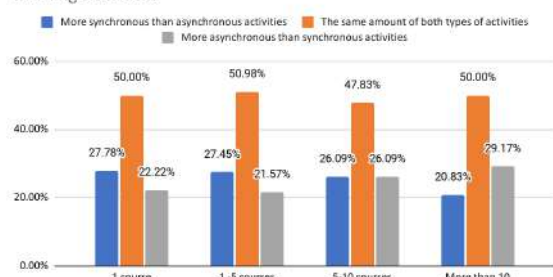
Overall, half of the people prefer to have an equal balance of synch and asynchronous activities and then one quarter prefers synchronous and one asynchronous, which is once again in balance.

How would you balance between synchronous and asynchronous learning activities?



When it comes to age groups, the age group of 25 to 30, interestingly has no person that prefers more asynchronous, but the sample in this group is the smallest, so this might not be an accurate representation. One other thing is that learners over 50 have the strongest preference for synchronous activities.

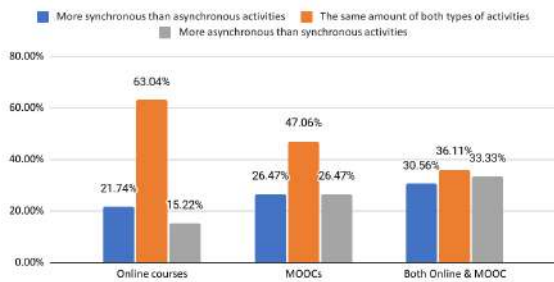
How would you balance between synchronous and asynchronous learning activities?



Here is an interesting trend. The more courses learners take part in, the stronger their preference for asynchronous activities is. This is still not a big difference, but the trend is clear. This can have quite a logical reason, as the more courses a person takes, the more time is needed and synchronous activities require more time invested and more adjustment to other learners.

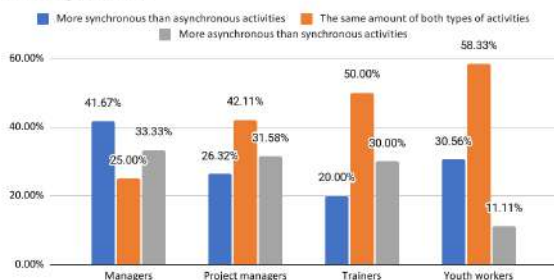


How would you balance between synchronous and asynchronous learning activities?



Interestingly enough, those learners who participated in both types of courses seem to have a bit more layered opinion than others and are the only group that has a significantly lower average for the balance between synch and asynchronous. The ones that are advocating the most for the balance are the participants in online courses.

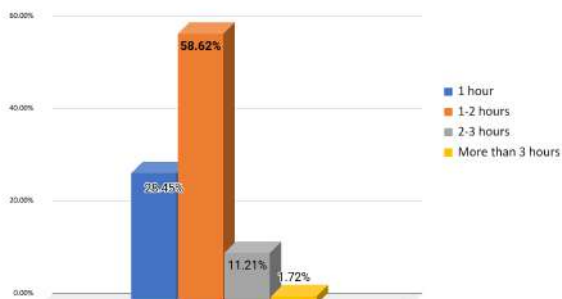
How would you balance between synchronous and asynchronous learning activities?



Managers prefer synchronous and even asynchronous overbalance. Whereas YW are in favour of the balance and do not prefer asynchronous. Perhaps the nature of their work goes more in favour of being at the same time with others? Or probably because they have a clear schedule of work, and they therefore can programme their learning more efficiently knowing when synchronous activities are scheduled.

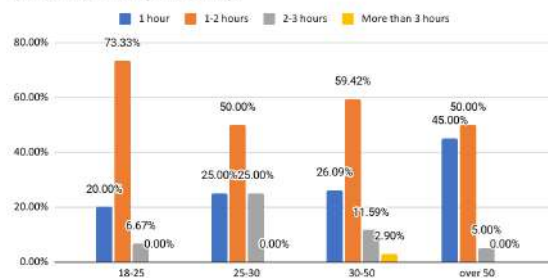
What is for you the ideal duration of a synchronous learning activity (webinar, online panel, etc.)?

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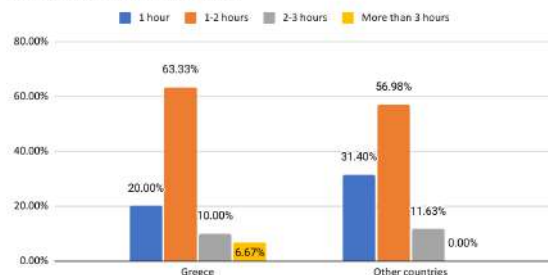
Overall, 1-2 hours of duration of a synchronous learning activity seems to be the winner with 58,62% of the responses, followed by 1 hour that gathers 28,45% of responses. Only 11,21% of respondents chose 2-3 hours, and more than three hours was only favoured by 2 people in total!

What is for you the ideal duration of a synchronous learning activity (webinar, online panel, etc.)?



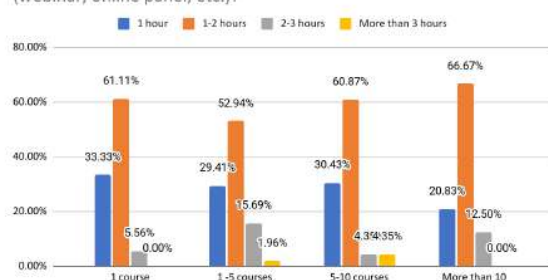
While the duration of 1-2 hours is the favourite of all ages for the younger learners it seems to be a learning necessity since only the 26,67% have chosen another duration than the 1-2 hours. The age group of 30-50y.o. follows, rating 1-2 hours in the highest position with 59,62% of answers. Learners from Greece prefer slightly longer duration than from other countries, but this is not a large number.

What is for you the ideal duration of a synchronous learning activity (webinar, online panel, etc.)?

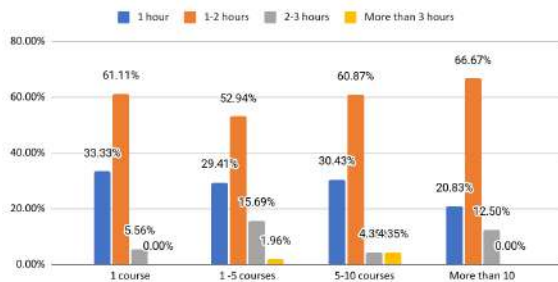


There is a slightly bigger percentage for 2-3 hours in the group of 1-5 courses and more than 10. This could be due to experience and understanding that these activities take time for the group to warm up. Still, those who attended 5-10 do not share this view.

What is for you the ideal duration of a synchronous learning activity (webinar, online panel, etc.)?

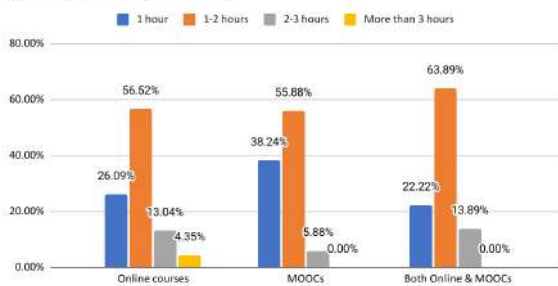


What is for you the ideal duration of a synchronous learning activity (webinar, online panel, etc.)?



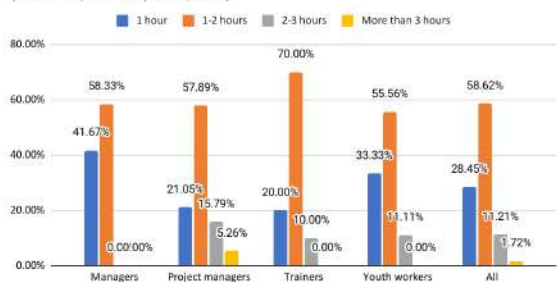
According to this, MOOCers prefer shorter activities than others. But that could be down to the nature of MOOC synchronous activities, which are mostly webinars and are mostly shorter than group meet-ups in online courses.

What is for you the ideal duration of a synchronous learning activity (webinar, online panel, etc.)?



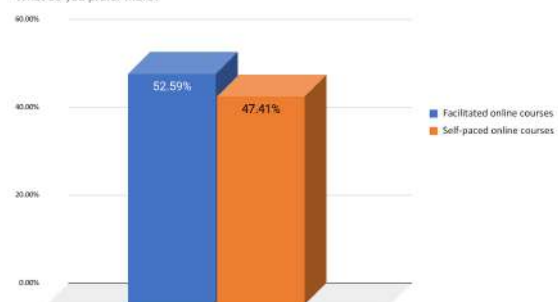
Perhaps unsurprisingly, managers prefer shorter activities. And trainers prefer 1-2 hours, which is somehow a 'standard' in the training world, so it can go as a default.

What is for you the ideal duration of a synchronous learning activity (webinar, online panel, etc.)?



### What do you prefer more?

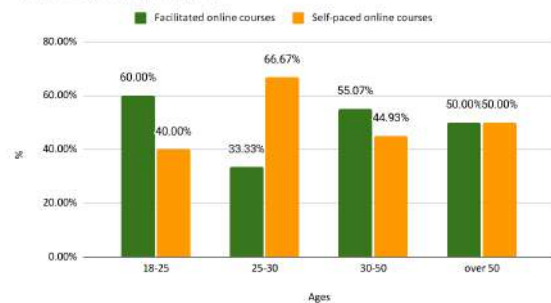
What do you prefer more?



Overall, the preferences are quite balanced, though facilitated online courses still 'win' by 5% or so.

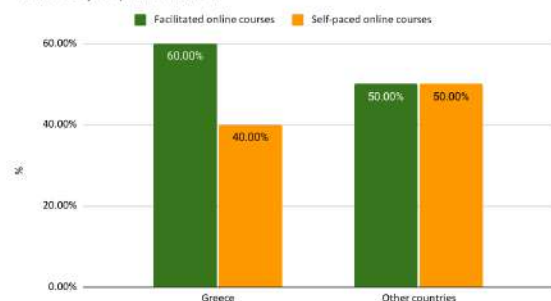
Those above 50 have no clear preference. The youngest target group is more in favour of facilitated courses (perhaps due to lack of experience with NFE), while 25-30 is significantly more in favour of self-paced courses. Probably the reason why this group is often out of the pattern is that it is much more narrow than the others, being only 5 years range.

What do you prefer more?



In Greece is a bit more in favour of facilitated, while in other countries is perfectly balanced.

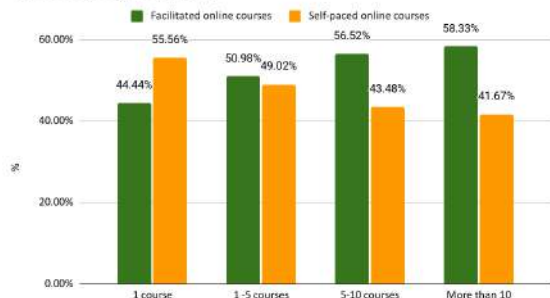
What do you prefer more?



There is a growth in support for facilitated courses with the number of courses attended. Perhaps with the number of courses, it becomes evident that self-paced courses are limited in terms of what they could offer.

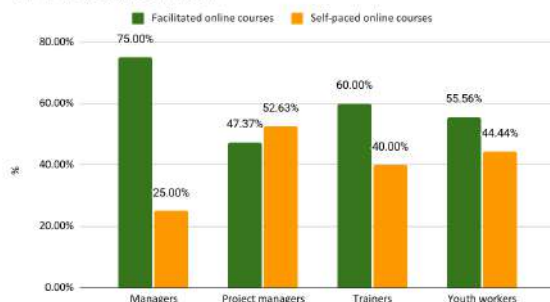
On the other hand, more courses could signify more experience with online learning, which should imply that the learner feels more comfortable being independent in their process...

What do you prefer more?

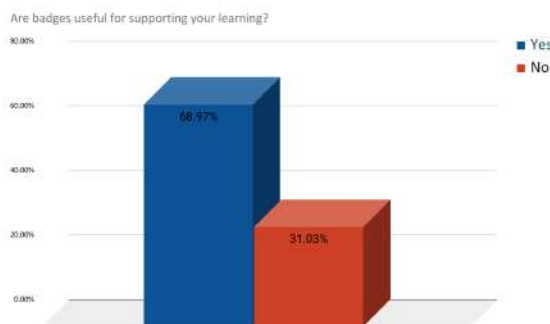


Managers quite strongly prefer facilitated, whereas for others it is more balanced.

What do you prefer more?

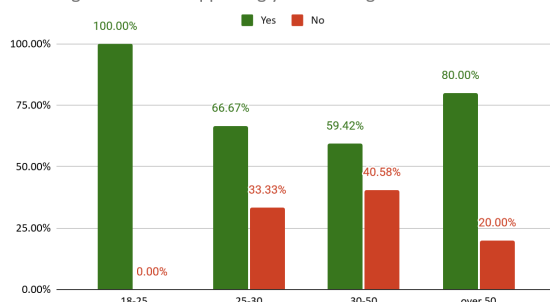


Are badges useful for supporting your learning?



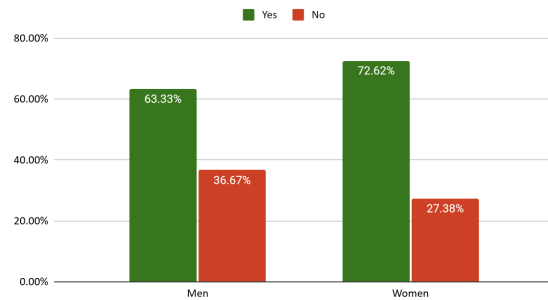
Two-thirds overall for yes, with the highest support among the youngest target group (100%) and those over 50. Those between 30 and 50 seem the most sceptical, though still in favour of the badges. This is kind of interesting, being this age frame also more familiar to the badge system.

Are badges useful for supporting your learning?



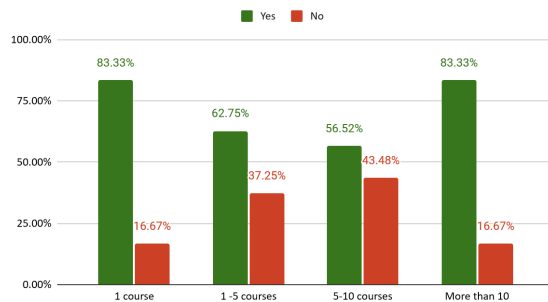
Women seem more in favour of the badges and quite strongly so.

Are badges useful for supporting your learning?



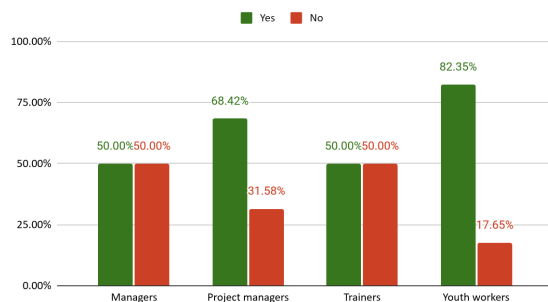
Like with the age, those attending one course or more than 10 (so, on the 'extremes') are very much in favour of the badges. Perhaps it comes with first enthusiasm and then persistence as well - badges make sense when they build on one another.

Are badges useful for supporting your learning?



Managers and trainers are less inclined, while youth workers seem to love them! Perhaps they are just following the taste of young people they are working with? Or probably because the badges are more visible to all, quicker to apply to youngsters and to reach objectives, kind of "showing" results also for the project managers.

Are badges useful for supporting your learning?



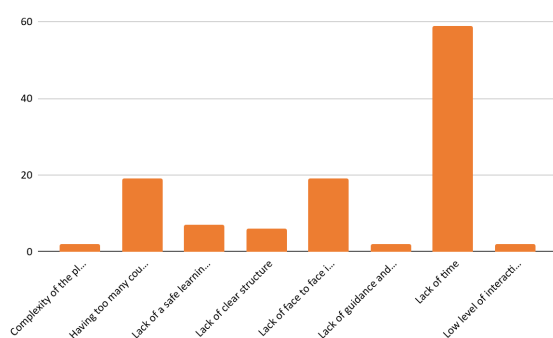
What of the following would you like to see more and what less in an online course?



Interactive activities and visual elements were the activities most requested by the respondents, which relates well to question 20, where tasks and integrated visual elements/videos were among the activities assessed as the most effective. Informal socialisation is the least appreciated, even though the interaction between the participants is valued highly. This pattern could mean that in online learning, learners prefer to be focused on the tasks and learning, rather than on socializing with others. Inputs from external experts are also not appreciated much.

#1	Interactive activities	#2.81 average
#2	Visual elements	#4.54 average
#3	Interaction between the participants	#4.74 average
#4	Reading materials	#4.89 average
#5	Facilitation from the educators	#5.57 average
#6	Freedom to choose what and when to learn	#5.84 average
#7	Time to complete tasks	#5.91 average
#8	Tasks and assignments	#6.15 average
#9	Inputs from external experts	#7.15 average
#10	Opportunities for informal socialisation	#7.4 average

What of the following prevents you most from learning in online courses?



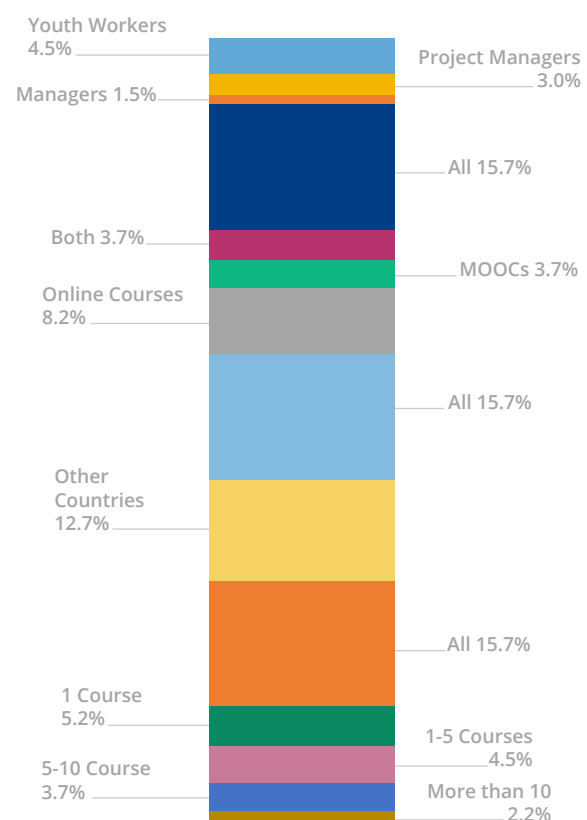
The findings on this specific question have much to say! If we want to look into creating quality online and blended learning activities then here might be a key point to look at.

A majority of the learners' respondents answered that the lack of time is preventing them from learning while 19 responses equally follow the "Having too many courses assignments" and "lack of face to face interaction". Those elements should be taken into consideration by facilitators/educators and course providers as well, to ensure quality in online and blended learning activities.

On a scale from 1 to 5, how much do you use the digital tools that you learned in the online courses (e.g. in your own online courses, in youth work)?

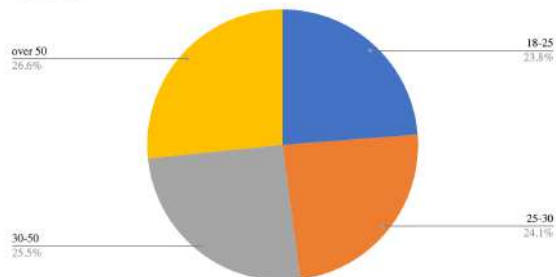
Looking at the overall picture (next page graph), we can see that the average how much digital tools learned in an online course was used on a later stage by the respondents, scored 3.82. That is a quite positive average and it can be analysed in the graphs below.

How much do you use the digital tool that you learned in the online courses?



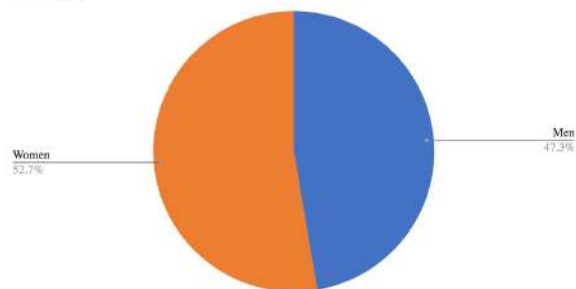
It grows with age, which could mean with practice as well? Or also it might be self awareness of what is learned and how to apply it once digested.

How much do you use the digital tools that you learned in the online courses?



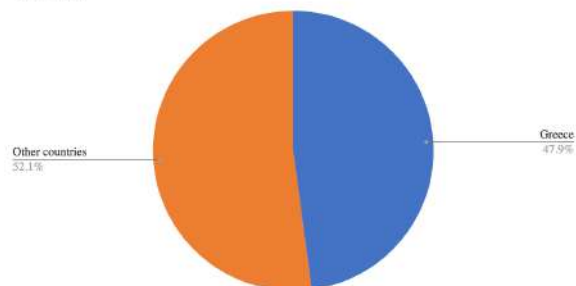
Women a bit more than men.

How much do you use the digital tools that you learned in the online courses?



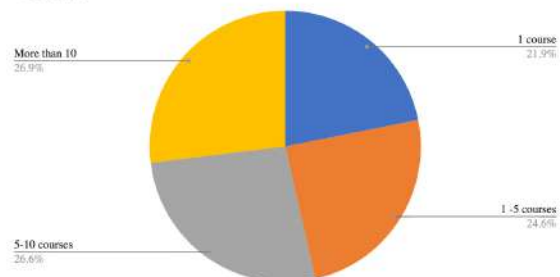
Other countries a bit more than Greece.

How much do you use the digital tools that you learned in the online courses?



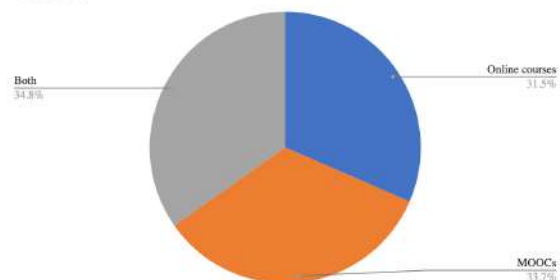
Grows with the number of courses, which could be quite logical - the more people attend and experience the tools, the easier it becomes to apply them in their practice? Here to notice also a correlation between the age groups and the number of courses they attended. There are often similar trends within the same question.

How much do you use the digital tools that you learned in the online courses?



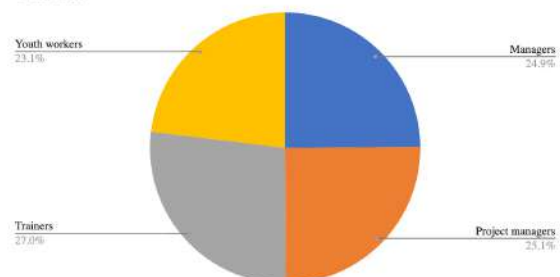
MOOCs a bit more than online courses and then both even more. With MOOCs it could be because the focus is more on tools within the courses as well, as there are fewer ess synch opportunities. In addition, one part of learners also come because they would like to search for new ideas, content and tools. And one other element could also be that the content of Mooc remains longer available and the tools can be seen again, while in other online courses not always the materials/tools remain available longer.

How much do you use the digital tools that you learned in the online courses?

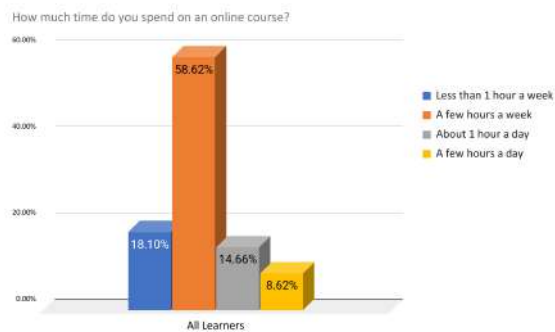


Clearly, trainers are there to steal the tools! Joke aside, it is interesting that it is the least for the YW, as they also do educational activities with the young people... This could also mean that Youth Workers don't use many online tools for their own daily practice.

How much do you use the digital tools that you learned in the online courses?

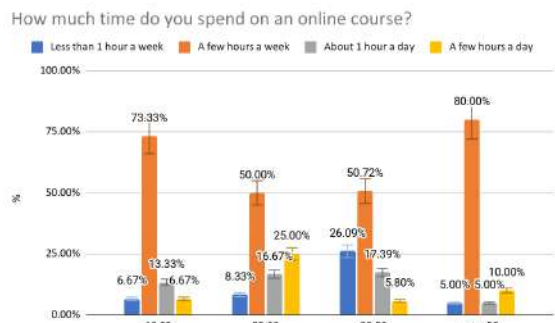


## How much time do you spend on an online course?

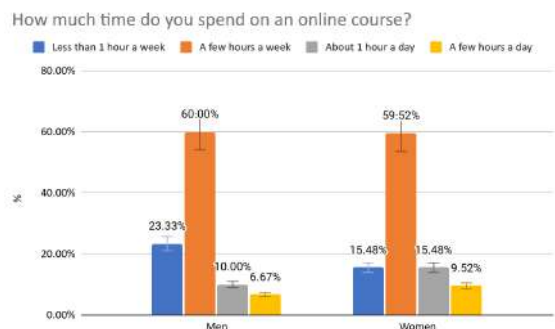


Like with the hours for the synchronous activity, the second option, with a few hours per week, is the most 'popular' one. A question would be, if people know how much time they spend or if it is more the estimate and then it is not the minimum offered in the survey, but it is also not a lot of time, so the second option seems the most natural.

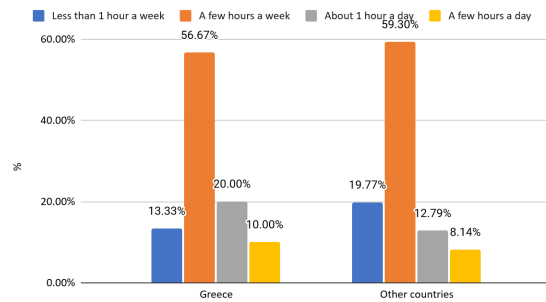
The difference between the age groups is there, but where there is the highest jump, the sample is smaller than others (25-30).



Women seem to be willing to spend a bit more time than men on the courses. Would it mean that men consider themselves quicker learners? Or would it mean that women love to learn more than men?

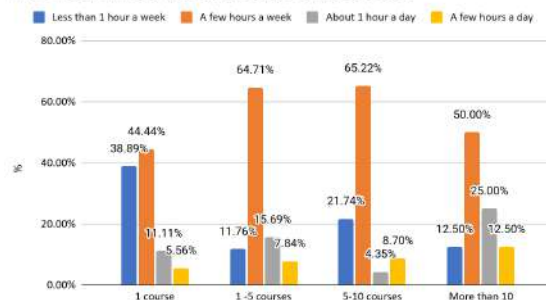


## How much time do you spend on an online course?



Those who attended more than 10 courses are more likely to invest even a few hours per day. Is it because they are used to the rhythm or because they anyway have more time to spend on online courses and hence also a number of them attended? In general, a few hours a week seems to be a good time investment for all.

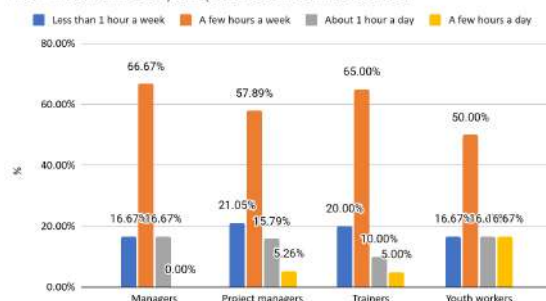
## How much time do you spend on an online course?



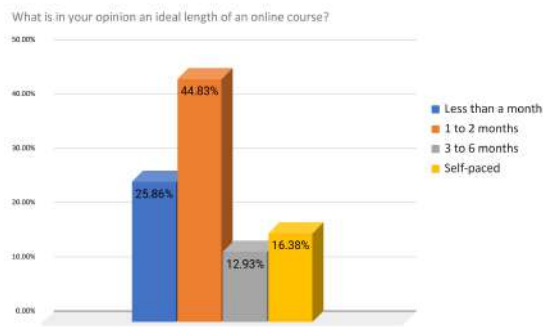
Youth workers seem to be more willing to invest in longer hours, while trainers are the least (more or less together with the managers). Are these the busiest categories?

Anyway, this gives good information when creating courses for particular target groups.

## How much time do you spend on an online course?



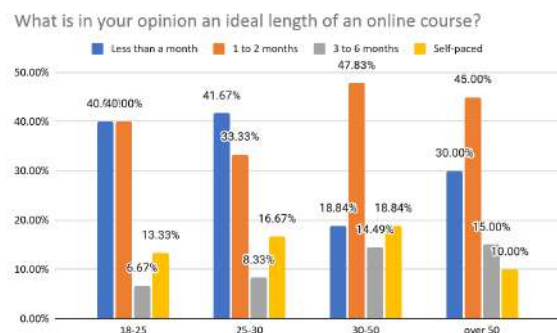
What is in your opinion an ideal length of an online course, taking into account both synchronous and asynchronous learning activities?



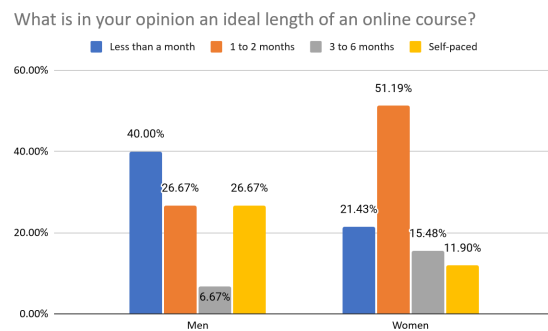
Overall, the second option wins again!

The ideal length of an online course according to the respondents is between 1 and 2 months, with less than a month being the second most popular choice. Younger learners particularly appreciate shorter courses, with 80% of 18-25 year olds and 75% of 25-30 year olds preferring courses that are up to 2 months.

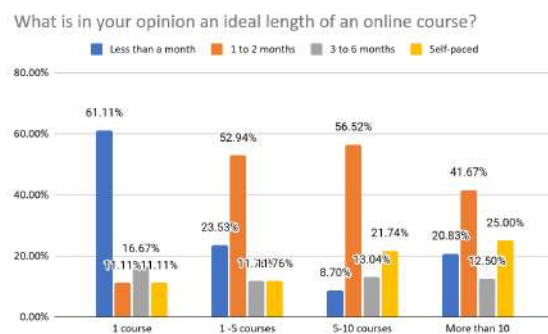
Especially for 30-50 year olds, who as the biggest age group then push the percentage for this option higher. The next option is less than a month and then self-paced. 3-6 months is not particularly popular with any group, but at the same time, there aren't that many courses that last long (neither online nor residentially), so besides no time to spare, it could be due to a lack of evidence and experience in lengthy courses. Probably we need to take into consideration that some long-lasting courses can be university courses also on a payment basis.



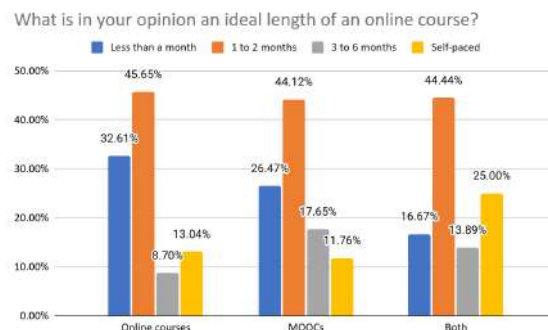
Men prefer short(er) and self-paced courses, while women go for 1-2 months. Compared to the question about willingness to spend time on the course, it seems women are willing to invest a bit more time. Or this could mean that women need to plan on a mid term/longer perspective on their learning and working agenda.



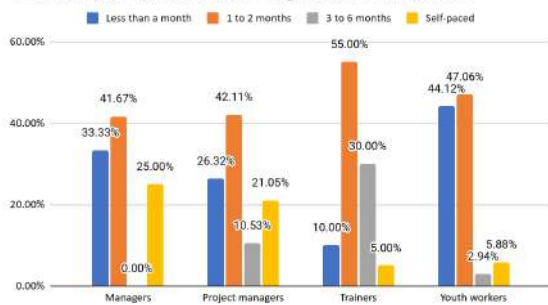
First-timers (or those that did one course and choose it wisely) are definitely in favour of short courses, whereas others go for 1-2 months. Those who have 5+ courses seem to become more in favour of self-paced courses. So, for those more experienced in online learning, this seems to be a fairly popular option. This makes sense as experience is also more clear what/when and how much each learner would like to invest.



MOOC participants seem to be a bit more in favour of longer courses, but MOOCs are generally longer than online courses. Hence, this could be down to the experience as well.

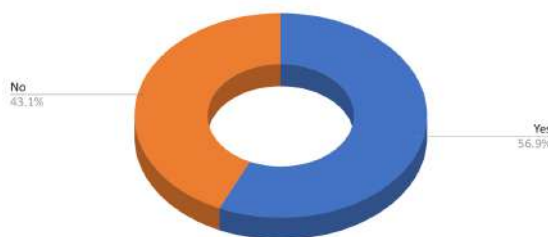


What is in your opinion an ideal length of an online course?



### Have you participated in a blended learning activity?

Have you participated in a blended course?



### What is the most important added value of blended activities compared to online activities?

Under this question, the participants were asked to rank according to importance seven benefits from blended learning that bring an added value compared to online learning activities. According to the answers, almost equal numbers of the respondents think that blended learning allows you to better prepare for the residential course; that it helps extend the duration of the learning process; it supports the group formation; and it provides diversity in learning methods.

Overall rating of the type of benefit according to the preference from the respondents:

It allows you to better prepare for the residential course

The duration of the learning process is extended

It supports the group formation

It provides diversity in learning methods

It allows you to complete some tasks in your own rhythm

It allows you to follow-up the learning after the course

It enables you to bring in your local environment in the online phase

It supports the group formation

It allows you to better prepare for the residential course

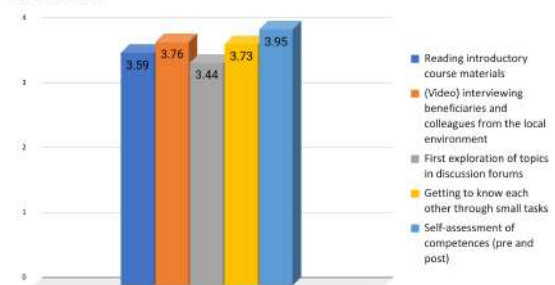
It allows you to complete some tasks in your own rhythm

The duration of the learning process is extended

It enables you to bring in your local environment in the online phase, It allows you to follow-up the learning after the course, It provides diversity in learning methods

### On a scale from 1 to 5, which methods are the most useful to be done in the online phase of the blended course?

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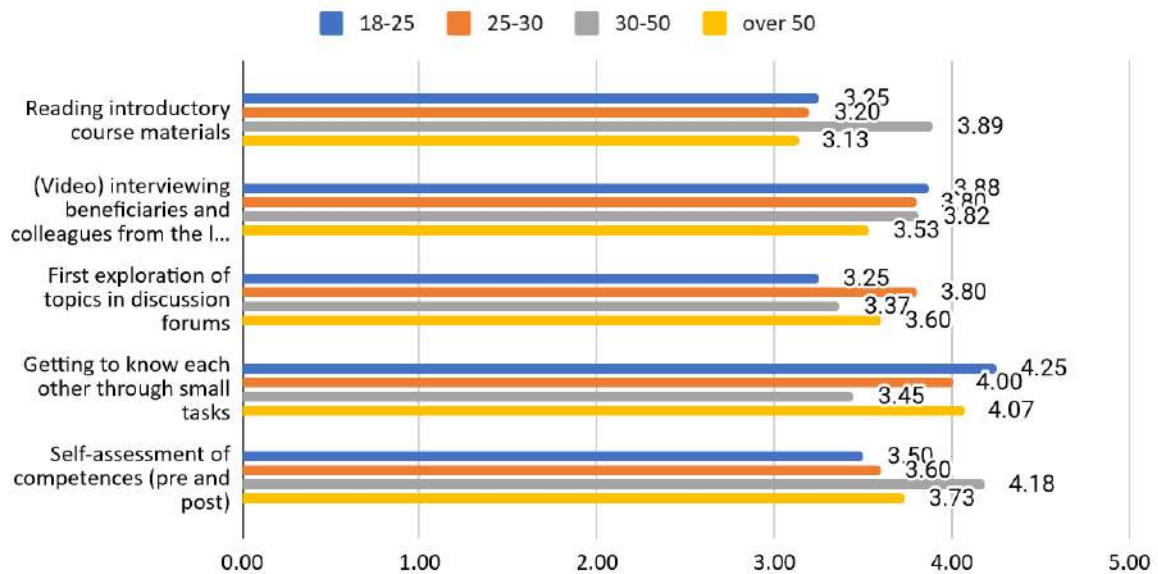
Overall, the self-assessment 'wins'. Given that in its nature, it is 'pre' and 'post' it could make sense. The next one is interviewing someone in the local community. These two tasks are quite independent of the rest of the group, perhaps this makes them more suitable?

For getting to know each other, the youngest group marked it quite high and significantly higher than other target groups. Once again, this could be due to autonomy and independence, which gives an important

aspect to be underlined.

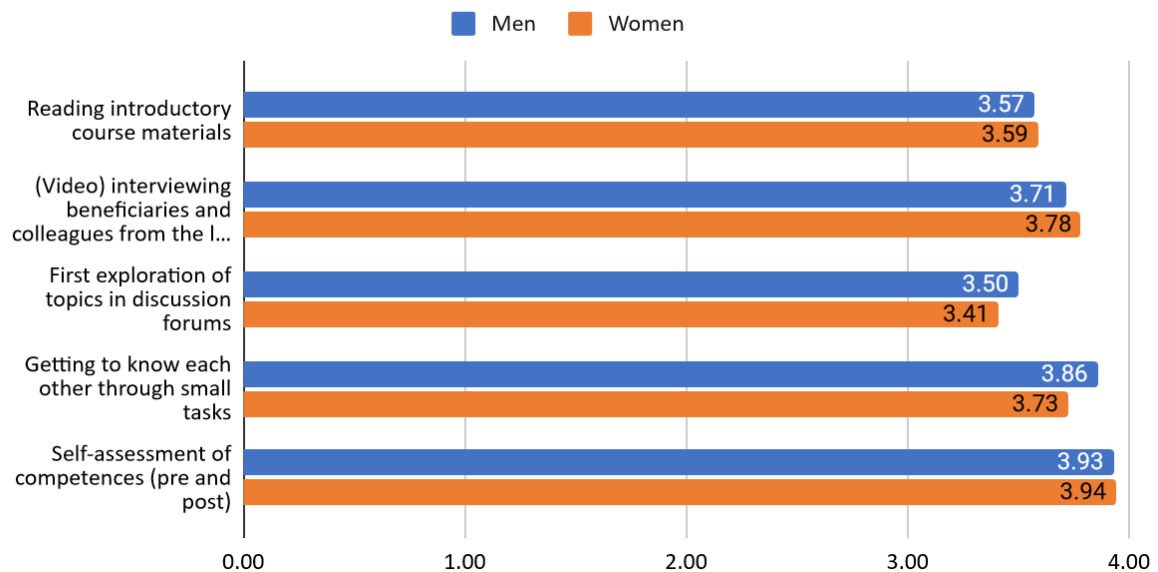
For the younger categories (18-25 and 25-30) it seems clear that the most useful methods would be getting to know each other through small tasks. In second place would be the first exploration of topics and interviewing. While for 30-50 age the self assessment is the most useful followed by reading intro material.

On a scale from 1 to 5, which methods are the most useful to be done in the online phase of the blended course?



The trend between men and women here seems to be similar, while both are preferring the "getting to know each other" "interviewing" and "self-assessment" as more useful.

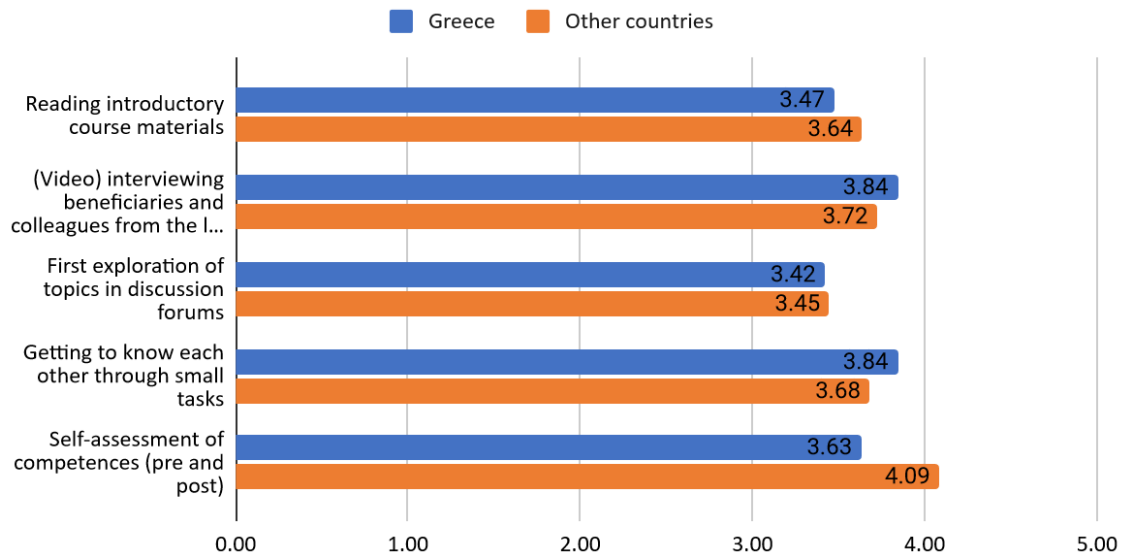
On a scale from 1 to 5, which methods are the most useful to be done in the online phase of the blended course?





Very interesting! Greece is less keen on self-assessment than the others. Could this be due to practice in the country?

On a scale from 1 to 5, which methods are the most useful to be done in the online phase of the blended course?

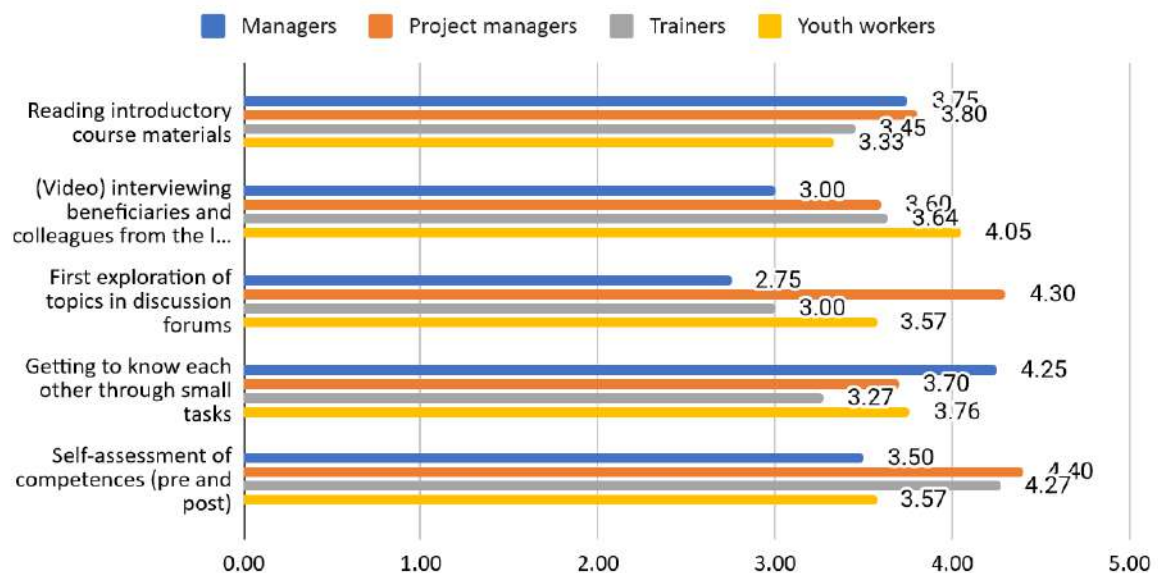


Managers and project managers seem more keen on reading than others, but then less willing to do interviews in the local community. More passive than active competence development? But then managers would like to engage in small group discussions?

Managers also do not seem very keen to interact with others, while project managers are (more in need of collegial support?)

Managers and youth workers are not so positive about the self-assessment, while this is perhaps the only thing trainers are positive about! This is probably because youth workers are lacking knowledge/practice with self assessment while for trainers it is very much at the international/erasmus+ level on a daily basis.

On a scale from 1 to 5, which methods are the most useful to be done in the online phase of the blended course?



**What more would you like to add, which can help online learning educators to design more effective online and blended learning courses?**

There were almost as many different answers to this question as there were people providing them! This could imply that we still do not know that much about online/blended learning and the answers are based on people's personal preferences and individual observations. This can be supported by most of the answers, in fact, either asking for online to be used only as complementary to residential or proposing things that are known from residential settings. (e.g. "we should remember that in non-formal education settings working online is or shouldn't be our first choice (face to face interaction is the best choice)". This could imply that most of the respondents (and most of the community as a whole) are still not versed enough in the online learning to propose more comprehensive changes/additions.

Connected to that, one thing that, at least several respondents agree on is to make sure to have a mix of learning environments: online, face to face, self-directed. Or, in other words, for those respondents, the only good online learning is when blended with face-to-face learning as well. Even if the course is online, having tasks to be done 'offline' (individually or in a small group and then reporting through an online tool) can be highly beneficial.

Another thing that was mentioned several times is different things that can maintain the focus of the learners. In fact, **focus** has been highlighted several times, as the attention span is limited online, so it is important to find ways to keep the focus away from distractions. This could be done through more **creative and interactive** (more involvement from the participants) **methods** and **small group work** (pairs, breakout rooms during live sessions, networking). Other ways to achieve this is by having **short(er) courses** and/or **short(er) live sessions**, as well as **shorter and more frequent breaks**.

Furthermore, several respondents mentioned

the importance of **learners' ownership of the course** and **possibilities to influence its contents**. Some suggestions are: collecting learners' needs and learning objectives; opportunity for feedback and changes in the course; common decisions about the dates of the live sessions, personal approach and a sense of community.

**Individual tasks** were highlighted by several participants as well: tasks to prepare individually and then share with the group, as well as assignments that will be followed by facilitators or peer feedback.

**Recognition and Youthpass** were mentioned as well. Namely, more recognition for the learning achieved; Youthpass reflecting the average time that the course needs; Youthpass reflects the modules of the course; Youthpass translated to different languages.

Finally, there were a few more individual suggestions: not forgetting about the body (movement, sensations); having all materials in one place; not using too many tools; enabling informal experiences; more practices from organisations; video interviews from experts in the field.



### 3.2. Courses Educators/Facilitators

While most of the survey questions for learners were based on already formulated answers for the Facilitators/Educators the team selected to work on open-ended questions as well due to the experience that this target group have with online and blended learning activities. Find below their responses.

**What excites you the most about online learning platforms? What are the key opportunities that they offer?**

One respondent wrote: "They are available for everybody everywhere." And many respondents shared this view, as they highlighted **inclusion and accessibility**, including reaching out to those who would normally not be involved. This is a bit at odds with many preferring face to face learning in their answers to this survey as learners, while accessibility is one of the key principles of non-formal learning and, hence, should work strongly in favour of online/blended learning.

This accessibility and reach is mentioned in two ways: **reaching more people** (in numbers) and then to **those who are facing certain obstacles for participating in face-to-face learning opportunities**: due to a certain disability, or by being more shy and introverted (having social anxiety), living in remote areas, or simply not being too keen on travelling. For those who struggle with being part of larger groups, online learning enables them to have that community spirit, while being able to influence the level of interaction (especially in asynchronous courses, learners themselves decide to which extent they want to interact with other learners).

In addition, it was highlighted that online learning enables **richer international encounters**, because the distance is not an obstacle.

Connected to that, asynchronous learning opportunities enable learners to **connect according to their own time schedule** (and even the time zone), which enables an even wider access.

This, in turn, leads to **greater flexibility**, which was another aspect that was raised by quite a few respondents. Flexibility in terms of time spent, places where learning happens, pathways of learning, etc. Flexibility can, furthermore, be connected to **more autonomy in learning**, as online, especially asynchronous opportunities, can be (more) suitable for self-directed learning. Flexibility is directly connected to **time saving/time management**, as time is saved on travelling, but self-paced learning also enables one to manage time for learning more flexibly.

**Versatility** (The ability to adapt) was another aspect highlighted that also supports more flexibility in learning. There are many platforms (learning environments) and tools that are available and complement each other and courses are easier to be adapted to different learning styles. This in turn provides more opportunities for participation. And for some people, this versatility of platforms and tools also breeds more **creativity**.

Another important aspect, mentioned by several respondents, was opportunities for **interaction and peer feedback and learning**. When tasks are completed, individuals can easily upload them for others to see and provide their feedback. There are also **diverse opportunities for interaction** (versatility once again) and direct contact with the learners.

Furthermore, the fact that **content can remain**, even beyond the duration of a specific course is seen as a great advantage of online learning. This applies also to recorded content (e.g. webinars), but also materials that can be available all the time to the learners.

Besides those most common ones, there were several other aspects mentioned: **novelty** (new opportunities, new partners, new approaches), greater **traceability and statistics**, the possibility to **structure information in clear blocks**, as well as to **summarise them visually** (by using different digital tools), **automated recognition system** (issuing badges based on specific criteria) and **development of digital competences** is seen

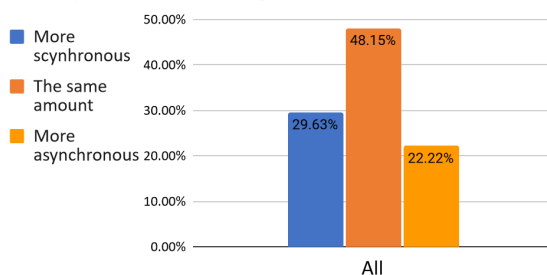
as a great benefit of learning as well.

Finally, several respondents also mentioned the benefits for the trainers. More flexibility in their work, convenience from using their own, familiar space for facilitation.

**The key benefit of blended learning** is that it enables a combination of residential and online learning and could be very beneficial if we understand what methods to use and which topics to cover in residential and which online.

### In your opinion, how to balance between synchronous and asynchronous learning activities?

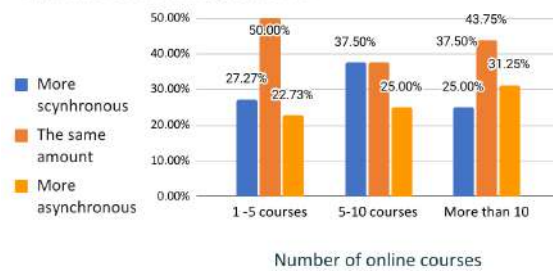
In your opinion, how to balance between synchronous and asynchronous learning activities?



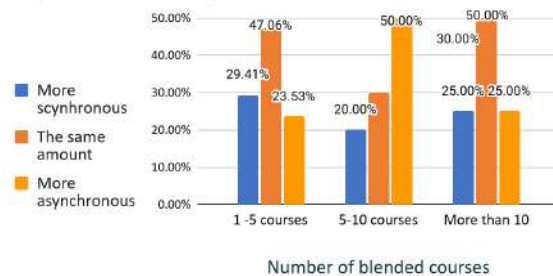
The vast majority (almost half of them) of the respondents answering from the perspective of an educator/facilitator seem to prefer to have an equal amount of time given to synchronous and asynchronous learning activities.

While in online courses educators/facilitators seem to be not yet decided which is the best way to balance the synchronous and asynchronous learning activities since the numbers that the responses given are “playing” up and down no matter the experience or the number of online courses that they have been facilitating, when it comes to blended learning activities we can see a clear decrease of the preference of synchronous activities through the facilitation of more courses.

In your opinion, how to balance between synchronous and asynchronous learning activities?



In your opinion, how to balance between synchronous and asynchronous learning activities?



### What are the approaches/methods that you use the most in facilitating online learning?

22 facilitators have placed as their 1st or 2nd option the “interactive approaches and methods” while another 20 have chosen as their 1st or 2nd option to be discussions.

On the least preferred method is placed the “Expert input” receiving just 12 responses as 1st or 2nd option. Interactive activities are the most preferable method chosen by educators and facilitators to use while facilitating online courses followed by “discussions” with their learners.

Approach/Method	No. of 1 <sup>st</sup> & 2 <sup>nd</sup> answers
Discussions	20
Expert Inputs	12
Individual tasks	16
Interactive activities	22
Small group tasks	19
Synchronous activities	19

On a scale from 1 to 5, how much do you use the following tools in facilitating online learning?

Men	3.8
Women	3.87
All	3.85
Number of online courses	
1 -5 courses	3.68
5-10 courses	3.63
More than 10	4.25
All	3.85
Number of blended courses	
1 -5 courses	3.76
5-10 courses	4.1
More than 10	4.25
All	3.85
Trainers	3.83
Youth workers	4.07
All	3.85

In your experience, what are the main things missing on current online platforms for more productive/effective learning experience?

Unlike the advantages, where there were a few clear patterns emerging, when asked what is missing, there were a variety of different answers. This is a similar scenario to one when learners were asked what they would like to add. Hence, this might mean that neither learners nor facilitators are yet clear on how to improve online learning experiences, which could be due to lack of experience, competence in designing and facilitating online learning or commitment to developing it further. One person wrote: "However the platforms are more skilled than the facilitators who delivers online courses." We are not sure that this could be extracted as a conclusion and, at the same time, many of the things that were mentioned as missing are possible on the existing online learning platforms, but perhaps not yet fully explored by the facilitators.

That said, there were still a number of aspects that were mentioned by a few respondents, so they seemed to be prominently missing from the current platforms or, at least, the ways in which they are being used.

**Interactivity** was mentioned quite a number of times. More fun and interactive learning, more tools for co-creation, more interconnections and interactive tools.

**Direct contact with learners**, meaning one to one or at least live contact between learners and facilitators. This encompasses individual feedback, facilitation of breakout (or small) groups and live chats with the facilitators. Speaking of the chats, this option was mentioned by a few respondents, as a need not only between facilitators and learners but also among learners themselves and **interactivity**.

Connected to that is the **need for informal moments and a sense of community**. Human interaction, the "coffee break" time in which you informally interact, more team building and more support from facilitators with community building. Perhaps connected to that is an element that was mentioned by one respondent: *"Spatial feeling (only in a few of them like Mibo, Gather Town etc ) is what should be present everywhere for a more real use of spaces and interaction of participants."*

Then there is **user friendliness** of the platforms, as many of the current platforms do not make it easy for learners to follow and engage, which in turn does not contribute to motivation for online learning. Hence, there is a need for a clean design, attractive layout, user-friendly navigation, a more intuitive way for participants to interact with each other and, overall a better user experience (easier, better organised, all in one place).

There were two practical things highlighted as well.

A need for **automated reminders and notifications**. At the moment, this is particularly relevant for MOOCs, as facilitators can't do that if they have a group of

a few hundred people and mass reminders to all learners don't have such an effect. Automated notifications could be useful to remind learners about their progress and what is still missing, to notify if someone replied to a discussion or viewed a contribution or about news on the platform.

Having the possibility **to learn on the move**. Either through platform apps, which would be also compatible with CarPlay, so people could continue learning while on the move (or standing still in traffic) or activities that would require participants to move outside.

Additionally, the following things were mentioned: **more "whiteboard" options, seamless mobile experience** with well working resize of the content and good mobile UX; **data security; certificates; concrete explanation, examples; a broader range of integrated applications; internet connection and chat possibilities and accessibility options for persons with disabilities.**

Finally, a few respondents wrote that it would be good to have either customisable platforms or interconnection among different platforms to make the experience more user friendly. At the same time, one respondent wrote *"There's nothing missing. It is all about training design and deciding how (= for which purpose) to use them."*

**In your opinion as an educator, what is still needed in making the most effective learning experience in online learning?**

In a way, under this question, respondents summarised what had been said under what is working well and what is missing on the exciting platforms. Therefore, some of the things are repeating, which is very helpful to understand what are the most important elements to be taken into consideration when designing online learning opportunities. Still, there were some new insights shared that are quite important to consider.

For example, the need to **support learners in learning how to learn online**. Perhaps the transition from in person to online activities

has been taken for granted and there needs to be time and space for orientation, understanding the 'new' learning environments and ways to make the most out of learning within them. For example, *"Trainees must be prepared for a change in learning methodology and know in advance the platform where the training will take place."* Connected to that is the **motivation and will of participants to be more engaged**, which could arguably come from feeling more comfortable and able to learn online.

In order for this to happen, there might be a need for **competence building of the facilitators**, in order to have more experienced educators/facilitators able to design the courses and support the learners. One way to do that would be **multiplier workshops for facilitators**. In addition, there is a need for facilitators and learners both to develop their digital competences and gain experience: *"...this type of learning is still finding its place and it needs some time to learn all the rules to be effective."*

Another way to raise the level of motivation and engagement of learners is ensuring more **interactivity**, which is a running theme through this survey. This interactivity should include **informal moments and community building** and be applied to the group of learners, but also interaction between facilitators and learners. One respondent wrote: *"Remembering that people are still people and we need to insert more methods of active participation and adjust them for online work, instead of just grabbing tools and saying that is an online method."*

**(More) multimedia content** was mentioned as a way to attract and engage learners. Involving music, videos, and movies. having more video content with interactive video players where people can stop the video, answer some testing questions or give feedback to video creators. Smooth transition from one content piece to another, so that people would feel at ease going through the content.

That said, there is a strong need to make sure

that the content and the process are **accessible for all**. Though online learning might be more accessible to certain groups, there are still elements that are less accessible to those who are visually impaired or hard of hearing, for example.

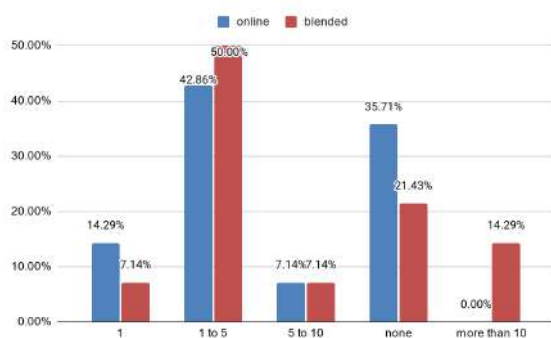
Furthermore, this question brought, once again, a few answers claiming that online will never replace in person learning and that if it is to stay, there needs to be a **balance of digital and analogue**. *"A good training design process to balance digital and analogic environments intentionally and according to a defined training-learning purpose."* This is a direct call for more blended learning opportunities.

Finally, there was a number of individual answers: make courses smaller and not so knowledge heavy; co-create content with learners; more design courses as project-oriented learning with practical outcomes; pluralism, extra info, correspondence with working force; easy ways to evaluate and receive feedback; more friendly user; stable communication, availability of technical means; rethinking learners experience, especially workload; a bit more practise, to master the tools; some extra tools to boost up the innovation; follow up meeting to check individual work and reflection; enough breaks, including the body and self reflection.

And one thing for the end: *"More immersion and fantasy, encouraging unlimited creativity in digital environments."*

### 3.3. Course Providers

Twelve different countries have been represented by "Course Providers". It is important to mention for the specific target group that 50% of the course providers have been already providing online courses and blended activities prior to the pandemic while the other 50% of the respondents started designing and providing online courses due to the pandemic breakout. 42,86% of respondents have been provided "1 to 5 online courses", while the 50% of them provided "1-5 blended learning activity courses"



Other important aspects are that of the respondents of the survey 70% are females and that 86% place themselves on the positive spectrum in the question "On a scale from 1 to 5, how easy it was to create/provide an online course or a blended learning activity?"

#### What do you believe is missing from online courses and/or blended courses?

Due to a limited number of answers, it is difficult to extract any meaningful trend. However, when comparing to other patterns emerging throughout the survey what is being repeated here is the need for more interactivity (also between the participants) and direct connection with the organisation. In addition, there is better preparation of the participants, more resources and a good structure/flow of the topic from the beginning till the end.

Finally, one repeat opinion: *"Eye to eye is always better."*

**04.**

## CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS



## 04. CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

### 1. What motivates learners to fully engage in online learning?

One of the objectives of this survey was to discover the features and characteristics that motivate learners to engage in and complete online and blended learning courses.

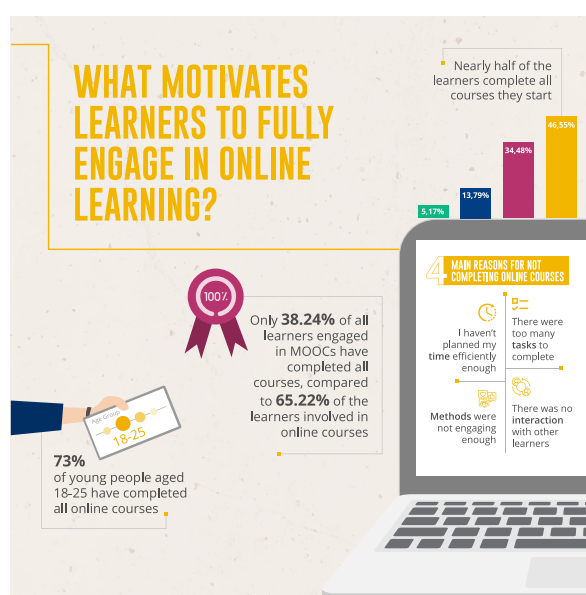
According to the survey results, **nearly half of the learners complete all courses they start**, while 5% of them don't complete any of the courses.

The results showed that those learners who have taken part in more than 10 courses have a higher completion rate compared to those that have taken fewer courses, which shows that online and blended learning clearly works better for some learners. The survey tried to identify who those learners are.

**Young people aged 18-25 complete more courses than the other age groups**, with 73% of all the survey respondents from this age group having completed all courses. Despite the relatively small number of respondents between 18 and 25, this could be an indication that online and blended learning works better for young people. This could be linked to the fact that for many of those learners online learning has already been part of their formal education in the past years, given that the survey was conducted shortly after the Covid-19 pandemic.

Survey respondents based in Greece had a higher completion rate than those coming from other countries – 60% of them have completed all courses compared to 41.86% of the others. When learners' profile is considered, online and blended learning seems to work better for managers and youth workers, compared to project managers and trainers. With this survey it was not possible to identify the reasons why these groups complete more online courses than others.

A major take away from the survey is that **MOOCs have significantly lower completion rate compared to facilitated online courses**. Only 38.24% of all learners engaged in MOOCs have completed all courses, compared to 65.22% of the learners involved in online courses.



Based on these findings, we can recommend online and blended learning for younger learners, for learners who already have significant experience in taking part in online courses and for youth workers and managers of organisations. In overall, if a higher completion rate is desired, then a facilitated online course is a much more efficient option compared to a MOOC.

The survey also asked learners about the reasons that prevented them from completing their online and blended learning courses. By far, the strongest reason was that learners haven't planned their time efficiently enough. The survey showed that **failing to plan their time is the main challenge for all learners**, regardless of their age, gender, experience, country of origin, or their role in youth work.



According to the survey results, **having too many tasks to complete and methods that are not engaging enough are the other obstacles that prevent most learners from completing courses.** However, some obstacles appear more significant for some groups of learners. For learners based in Greece, the second most important reason was lack of interaction with other learners. As there was not enough responders from other countries, it is impossible to conclude whether this could be true for learners from other geographical areas as well. However, this was one of the main reasons also for those aged above 50, who were much less concerned with the methods not being engaging enough. For participants in online courses, not having enough interaction with others was also the second most important reason for not completing a course.

Based on these findings, we can recommend to course providers and facilitators to be as clear as possible about the amount of time required by the course, so that the learners can plan their time accordingly. Furthermore, when designing the course, facilitators and course providers should be more conscious of the number and nature of tasks given to learners. They should also be careful to provide enough opportunities for learners to interact with each other, as this appears to be an important need for some profiles of learners.

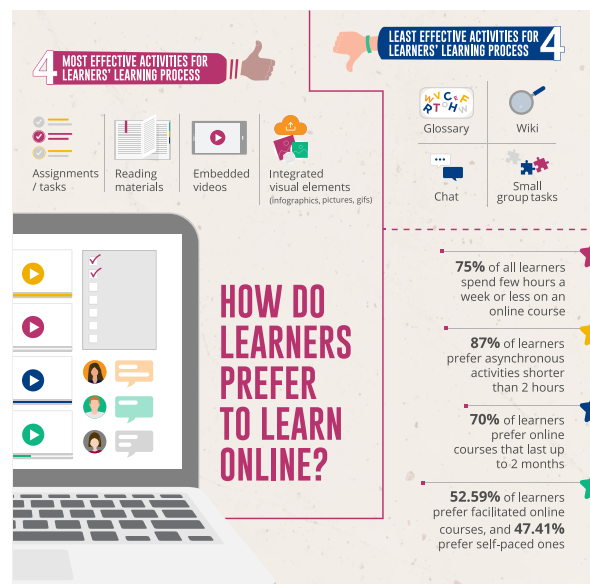
Finally, since the main reason for not completing courses is related not to the courses themselves, but to learners' competences, we recommend that more is done to support and prepare learners to take part in online and blended learning.

## 2. How do learners prefer to learn online?

The survey results showed that **assignments/tasks, reading materials and embedded/ integrated videos and other visual elements (infographics, pictures, gifs) are the most effective** for learners' learning process. The least effective activity appears to be the glossary, followed by wiki, chats and small group tasks. This means that

individual activities work better in online learning, compared to activities that should be done in groups or through interaction with others.

This finding is supported by the responses to another question of the survey: "What would you like to see more and what less in an online course?". The survey showed that **most learners want more interactive activities and visual elements.** The third most popular request from the learners is interaction between the participants, which seems to go against the findings from the previous question, when activities requiring interaction were deemed as the least efficient. However, this is in line with the finding that lack of interaction is among the main reasons for not completing online courses. When taken together, these findings could mean that the need for interaction exists and is important, but the activities currently offered by online learning platforms (such as wiki and chats) are not effective for achieving that purpose. Perhaps this also means that the methods that work well in an offline setting (such as group tasks) cannot be simply copied in an online environment.



The facilitators of online learning are somewhat in line with learners when it comes to effective methods to be used. The highest-ranking type of activity used by facilitators is "interactive activities", which responds to learners' needs, but the next most

popular activities are discussions, small group tasks and synchronous activities. As these do not really fit to what learners want to see in online courses, perhaps facilitators should reconsider their approach.

Based on this, we can recommend that the facilitators and course developers need to find new ways and methods to support interaction and cooperation between learners in online courses. At the same time, to make online courses more effective, they should create more interactive assignments/tasks and should strengthen the integrated reading materials, videos and various visual elements.

In general, learners prefer a **balance between synchronous and asynchronous activities**. However, the more learners take part in online courses, the stronger their preference for asynchronous activities is. This could mean that more experienced online learners are more independent and prefer completing tasks individually, rather than together with other learners.

The highest percentage of learners asking for a balanced approach between synchronous and asynchronous activities is found among the learners that have participated only in online learning courses. This is also one of the groups that has the least preference for asynchronous activities. Participants in online courses also generally evaluate synchronous activities as more effective than asynchronous ones. Youth workers are another group of learners that has a much stronger preference for synchronous activities.

The opinion of online learning facilitators is very similar, since almost half of them believe that they should be a balance between synchronous and asynchronous activities.

When it comes to the duration of asynchronous activities (webinars, online panels, etc.), **learners strongly prefer activities that last between 1 and 2 hours**, with less than 1 hour being the second most popular format. More than half of the learners spend a few hours a week on an online course,

including the synchronous and asynchronous activities.

The **ideal length of an online course is 1 to 2 months**, with some groups of learners preferring courses shorter than 1 month. The overall preference for self-paced courses versus courses that have a defined duration was 16.38%. However, the preference for self-paced courses grows with learners' experience, are more in favour of being in charge of their own pace of learning.

The survey showed that **there is a slight preference for facilitated online courses**, compared to self-paced ones. This is particularly true for young learners, experienced learners and learners who are managers, trainers and youth workers.

According to the narrative responses from survey participants, online learning is the most effective if it is **combined with face-to-face or offline learning activities**. Other elements that can make online learning more effective are more creative and interactive methods and activities that stimulate interaction between participants, as well as by planning shorter courses and shorter sessions with more breaks.

When deciding about delivering self-paced or facilitated courses, facilitators and course developers should take into consideration the profile of the target group, but they should keep in mind that facilitated courses are generally more preferred. If the course is facilitated, it is the best if it lasts between 1 and 2 months.

As much as possible, there should be a balance between synchronous and asynchronous activities, though more asynchronous activities are expected in MOOCs and more synchronous ones in facilitated courses. When working with experienced learners more asynchronous activities are recommended, while synchronous activities work much better for youth workers. In any case, synchronous activities should not last more than 2 hours. Altogether, the facilitators and course

developers can expect that most learners will spend up to a few hours a week on an online course, so they should adjust the amount of work accordingly.

Another recommendation is to try to incorporate offline and face-to-face learning elements in online courses, as this was seen as a way to increase effectiveness of online learning.

### 3. Which platforms and digital tools are the most effective for online learning?

**All main learning platforms used in the youth field are almost equally preferred by learners.** HOP, Canvas and the Council of Europe learning platform received an average rating on user-friendliness between 4.3 and 4.13 in the survey conducted within this study. Other learning platforms used by learners are within this average as well. There are small differences between different groups of learners, with young people learners preferring Canvas more, and older learners more inclined to moodle-based platforms. Participants in online courses have a higher average rating for all platforms compared to participants in MOOCs.

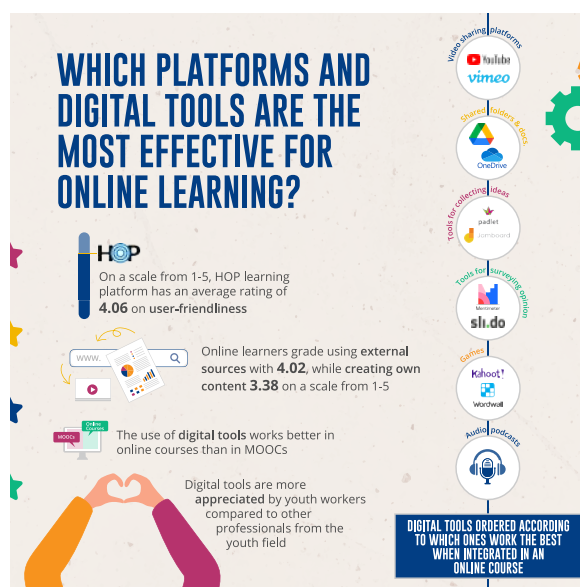
**All digital tools that are usually included in online courses were positively assessed by learners,** with an average rating over 3.44 on a scale from 1 to 5. Video sharing platforms (such as youtube and vimeo) and shared folders and documents (such as google drive and one drive) are preferred the most by learners, which goes along with the reading materials and embedded videos as the most preferred types of activities in courses next to tasks/assignments. On the other end, audio podcasts are the least appreciated digital tools across all different groups of learners.

Digital tools are generally more preferred in online courses than in MOOCs. The use of digital tools is also more appreciated by youth workers compared to other professionals from the youth field. According to the survey results, the attitude towards games (such as kahoot and wordwall) changes with age, with older learners being less appreciating compared to

younger ones.

The demand for other digital tools to be integrated in online courses is mostly about online quizzes, as well as tools for project management (such as Slack, Trello, Monday), and other more specific tools – Miro, Tricider, etc.

When comparing using existing sources and creating own content, all groups of learners show a strong preference for the former. This was also confirmed by the survey question about types of activities that are the most and the least effective ones, where wiki and small group tasks received a very low rating.



In general, learners tend to use the digital tools learned in an online course at a later stage, after the course. Older and more experienced learners tend to apply learned tools at a higher rate, which probably means the more people attend and experience the tools, the easier it becomes to apply them in their practice.

A recommendation for facilitators and course providers is that the choice of platform does not play a big role in the overall success of the course, even though it's important to keep in mind that younger learners have a slight preference for Canvas, and older learners for moodle-based platforms.

Integrating external digital tools also works

well for most learners, with some types of tools working better than others for different groups of learners. Hence, it is important to remember that we are all learning in different ways, and it is important to differentiate the learning approaches to accommodate to diverse learning needs. This is also very important to ensure inclusiveness of the platform, which is an essential aspect of its effectiveness.

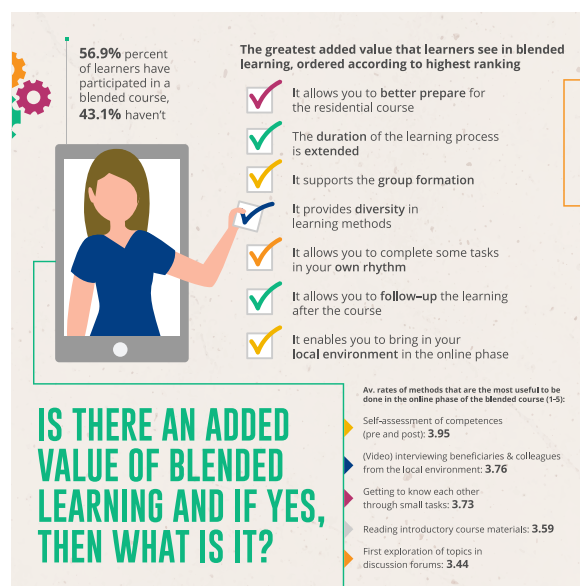
#### 4. Is there an added value of blended learning and if yes, then what is it?

**More than half of the survey respondents have participated in a blended learning activity.** The added value that learners see in blended learning is multifaceted – almost equal numbers of them think that blended learning allows you to better prepare for the residential course; that it helps extend the duration of the learning process; it supports the group formation; and it provides diversity in learning methods. This means that blended learning is seen as beneficial both prior to and after the face-to-face learning activity, even though not so much to follow up participants' learning.

The smallest portion of learners think that blended learning enables them to bring the local environment in the online phase. This shows that online learning usually does not involve the local community, or that such activities that are already implemented are not effective enough.

When it comes to the types of methods that are the most useful to be done in the online phase of blended learning, **learners prefer self-assessment of competences** (pre and post). This correlates well with the role of blended learning in preparing learners for the residential courser and in extending the learning process afterwards. Another method that is highly appreciated is interviewing beneficiaries and colleagues from the local environment, which shows that there is potential to be used for involving the community in the online learning process. Thirdly, learners appreciate the role of

blended learning in getting to know each other, something that is more seen as valuable particularly by younger learners.



Facilitators also see value in blended learning, mainly in that it enables a combination of residential and online learning. For facilitators, it would be beneficial to understand what methods and which topics to cover in residential and which in online activities, something that could not be explored within this study.

Based on the survey findings, we can recommend the implementation of blended learning by adding an online learning component to residential courses. The online learning part can be used both to prepare the participants for the residential phase, and to extend the learning process. However, facilitators should explore how to use blended learning more effectively to follow-up the learning process afterwards.

Facilitators should also think of how to turn online learning courses into blended learning experiences by incorporating face-to-face, offline learning activities. Potentially, such activities could also be used to involve the local community in the learning process, something which largely remains as an unused potential.

## 5. How to improve the quality of online learning?

No one can deny that the needs, interests and motivation to learn have been really transformed in the last years. A special “credit” to that should be given to the Covid19 pandemic that transformed the way that Non-Formal Learning activities are delivered and urged the need for its digital transformation (even though many trainers and educators have been underlining for many years that this should be the direction to take).

The fact that due to the pandemic, it felt a bit forced to move into the digital transformation, seems that led as well to “not so quality results” that this research tried to identify and point out, in order to improve bad practices and identify the trends that should lead our future steps. It is quite important though to mention that this research itself cannot offer the “ultimate” recommendations since it was limited in time and people reached. A proposal and recommendation from the research team could be that **this research results should be explored further by involving more learners and having different methods** for educators/facilitators and course providers such as focus groups and interviews.



One element that should be mentioned is the interaction, which is a running theme through this survey. This interactivity should be used to support learners to be more engaged, as well

as to strengthen interaction between learners and with the facilitators. Using multimedia content and various external tools could work for that.

Another element is the **need for competence building for facilitators to enable them to support learners in learning how to learn online**. A learner that can get the most from their own learning experience will be engaged and willing to complete a course. Even if online learning is not something new, it was urged due to the pandemic and that led to a vast majority of learners following that path. Without having previous experience, online learners could easily get lost in numerous different platforms, different digital tools, and new ways of learning, with a lack of guidelines, no efficient guidance and support. The responsibility of that should not be only on facilitators/educators, since they have also faced many difficulties in adapting their facilitating styles, and learning new methods, new tools, and new learning environments. Seeing those facts and learning from the past, facilitators should really take into consideration acting as learners and start building or improving their competences in how to support others through online learning.

If we want to look into creating quality online and blended learning activities, then a key point to look at could be the question on what prevents you to learn or to finish a course. A vast majority of respondents answered that **lack of time is preventing them from learning**, while the two next reasons were “Having too many courses assignments” and “lack of face to face interaction”. Those elements should be taken into consideration by facilitators/educators and course providers as well, to ensure quality in online and blended learning activities.

Hence, facilitators and course providers should think about how to support learners by creating courses on **“Learning to learn digitally”**. Something else that could be done is to ensure user friendliness of the platforms: clean design, attractive layout, user-friendly navigation, a more intuitive way for



participants to interact with each other and, overall, a better user experience (easier, better organised, all in one place). In addition, there is a strong need to make sure that the content and the process are accessible for all. Though online learning might be more accessible to certain groups, there are still elements that are less accessible to those who are visually impaired or hard of hearing, for example.

**Badges is another tool that can be used to support quality in online learning.**

Two-thirds of all learners said that badges are useful for supporting their learning. This percentage is even higher among some groups of learners, as 100% of respondents between 18 to 25 said badges support their learning, as well 80% of respondents older than 50. In addition, more experienced learners also value badges in a higher proportion – but also first timers. The percentage of youth workers who appreciate badges is also over 80.

To further develop the quality of online and blended learning, it should be clear that online and blended learning activities are not just substitutes for residential learning activities in times of need or a way to save money. Rather, they are the evolution of learning in a society that keeps changing and transforming in a digital way.







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